

SIMON MORRISON

THE PEOPLE'S ARTIST

PROKOFIEV'S SOVIET YEARS

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Simon Morrison

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For Galina Zlobina

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Note on Transliteration

The transliteration system used in this book is the system devised by Gerald Abraham for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980), with the modifications introduced by Richard Taruskin in *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (1993). The principal exceptions to the system concern commonly accepted spellings of names and places (Prokofiev rather than Prokof'yev) and suffixes (-sky rather than -skiy). In the bibliographic citations, however, the transliteration system is respected without exception (Prokof'yev rather than Prokofiev). Surname suffixes are presented intact, and hard and soft signs preserved.

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Introduction:

Moscow's Celebrity Composer

According to those who knew him best, Sergey Prokofiev led an impulsive, impetuous life in the moment. He was smitten with the technological advances of the modern age and took full advantage of high-speed communication and intercontinental travel. In 1918, after completing the rigorous program of studies at St. Petersburg Conservatory, he departed revolutionary Russia for an extended tour in the United States and, after a two-year stay, settled in France, where, like other leading artists of the period, he made Paris his home. From the perspective of the Kremlin, Prokofiev was not an exile but an ambassador at large of Russian (Soviet) culture, a trustworthy fellow traveler. During these years he composed three ballets and three operas, fulfilled recording contracts, and played recitals of his own tempestuous piano music. Scores were packed in suitcases, scenarios and librettos hectically drafted on hotel letterhead. The transience tired him, but he prided himself on being an optimistic, progressive person of action—the embodiment of a new metaphysics.

For the ballet critic Vadim Gayevsky, the first half of Prokofiev's career suggests a story about a great escape artist: "When something threatened him, when there was a whiff of danger in the air, he would board a train, a steam liner, an airplane or, as [the writer Nina] Berberova narrates, get in a car and leave without explanation while he was still in one piece."¹ In 1936, Prokofiev left Paris, an often inhospitable place for foreigners, to take up permanent residence in the Soviet Union, specifically the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR). He began visiting his transformed

homeland in 1927, gradually building up his contacts and increasing his time there until the move became inevitable. Most writers on twentieth-century music argue that Prokofiev thereafter found himself trapped, unable after 1938 to travel abroad, and unable to compose in the manner he desired. "By the end of the 1930s, the leading composers were on the other side of the Atlantic, while Prokofiev was locked away in Russia," Francis Maes relates, in reference to Sergey Rachmaninoff and Igor Stravinsky.²

Prokofiev perplexed his anti-Soviet Parisian colleagues by migrating to a totalitarian state whose artists were obliged to curtail experiment in support of official doctrine. And indeed, though valued by the regime and supported by its institutions, he suffered correction and censorship, the eventual result being a gradual sapping of his creative energies. He sought to influence Soviet cultural policy, but instead it influenced him. Prokofiev revised and re-revised his late ballets and operas in an effort to see them staged, but, more often than not, his labors went to waste. Following his censure in a political and financial scandal in 1948, jittery concert and theater managers pulled his works from the repertoire. Moreover, physical illness, a series of strokes precipitated by chronic high blood pressure, cast a pall on Prokofiev's last years. Housebound, he turned inward, fulfilling modest commissions for works on the theme of youth. These technically unambitious scores could be interpreted as attempts at psychic healing or, less certainly, as evidence of atavistic withdrawal. Gayevsky here proposes that the composer's final escape took place "in creative, rather than geographical, space."³

But the question remains: what convinced Prokofiev to relocate to Moscow in early 1936? The period was marked by, among other things, the marshaling of cultural activities under the auspices of the All-Union Committee on Arts Affairs, the enforcement of official doctrine, and a broad-based attack against the leading Soviet composer, Dmitriy Shostakovich. Western historians have interpreted Prokofiev's move as a pragmatic business decision. Frustrated competing with Stravinsky, orphaned following the sudden demise of his ballet mentor Sergey Diaghilev in 1929, and dismayed by his failure to secure performances of his operas, he succumbed to the enticements of Moscow and Leningrad cultural and political operatives. Since the *glasnost*' period, Russian historians have looked at the matter from a conspiratorial perspective, asserting that the composer was deceived by colleagues who underreported the political situation in the nation. Then there is the position adopted by the composer Alfred Schnittke, who in a 1990 lecture argued that Prokofiev "saw the world differently, even heard

it differently. No doubt nature had endowed him with fundamental gifts, means of perception, which were different from those of the vast majority of human beings.” Even so, Schnittke adds, Prokofiev “knew the awful truth about the time in which he lived.”⁴

The reasons for Prokofiev’s decision continue to be debated, though the discussion is fueled less by ideological biases, which have dominated Shostakovich journalism, than by a lack of information stemming, in some cases, from restricted access to archival sources. The archival materials I have studied in Moscow and other cities furnish new details about Prokofiev’s activities during this pivotal period in his career, as do the composer’s vibrant, lavish diaries, which were published by the Prokofiev estate in 2002, and the memoirs and correspondence of his friends and contacts.⁵ These materials trace a series of creative and personal upheavals that fascinate as much for their connection to the grave historical events that surround them as for their detachment from those events. For obvious reasons, Prokofiev does not reflect on the devastation and malevolence that defined Stalinism; the tone of his letters is controlled and businesslike, albeit enriched with dashes of acerbic humor and, in letters to friends, expressions of devotion. The reasons for his relocation are complicated and, in their own way, frightening. It emerges that the steel-willed composer never intended to remain in the Soviet Union. The regime needed celebrities, and he was lured into becoming one of them on the promise that nothing would change in his international career and that Moscow would simply replace Paris as the center of his operations.

This book is a detailed chronicle of Prokofiev’s years in the Soviet Union, one that focuses on his tumultuous experiences, the genesis of his works (complete and incomplete, performed and unperformed), and his response to official doctrine. Chapters 3 and 5 concentrate respectively on the three scores that Prokofiev produced for the 1937 Pushkin centennial and three of his film scores; in the other chapters the discussion unfolds in loose chronological fashion, with considerable attention paid to his opera *War and Peace*, an ambiguous masterpiece that occupied him for a dozen years and exists in multiple versions. Biographical detail—again, most of it from archival sources—is provided where it pertains to Prokofiev’s creative activities. I attempt, in essence, to document his artistic rather than his personal decision making, but I recognize that the two are often intertwined. For example, the shocking arrest and execution of Prokofiev’s theatrical muse Vsevolod Meyerhold is described within the context of their collaboration on a Soviet-themed opera, *Semyon Kotko*, and on the scoring and choreographing of an

outdoor athletics display; the details of his estrangement from his first wife, Lina (Carolina) Codina, are presented within a general account of his self-absorbed efforts to become the dominant Soviet composer. Prokofiev's health troubles and hospitalizations of necessity become relevant to the assessment of his late works.

Discussion of the composer's spiritual outlook is confined to discrete sections of the book, though it merits asserting, right at the start, that it governed his creative outlook. Beginning in 1924, long before his Soviet period, Prokofiev and his wife indoctrinated themselves in Christian Science, internalizing the foundational text of the faith, Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (1875), and consulting it for treatment of physical ailments. The composer subscribed to the principle that sickness was an illusion that stemmed from a loss of harmony with the godhead. Subsequent study convinced him that Christian Science and Kantian metaphysics had points in common, since "both reckon that the world surrounding us is only a representation."⁶ A diary entry from February 6, 1926, finds him considering the difference between self-love and love for others. He also affirms the inevitable triumph of good, an "infinite" force, over evil, a "finite" one:

Christian Science regards evil as unreal, for evil is a temporal entity; in eternity, where time does not exist, all that is temporal is unreal. The world instant is unrelated to eternity. Till when will evil last? Until individualities are strengthened to the extent that their mutual attractions no longer lead to fusion and annulment. Hence: a person's acceptance of good and rejection of evil is symptomatic of the maturation of his individuality.⁷

Prokofiev's emphasis on moral absolutes in his text-based works, and his preference for characters who believe in spiritual and nonspiritual causes over those who doubt, owes to his faith. In the 1930s and 1940s, he succeeded in tailoring his religious sentiments to a creative context that was relentlessly hostile to them.

It emerges from his diaries that Prokofiev defined his creative activities as embodiments of divine forces. His God-given talent came with great responsibilities: his life served his art, rather than the opposite, and this situation obliged him to take risks that defied external, nonartistic logic. In the mid-1930s, he composed a happy ending version of *Romeo and Juliet*. It

irritated Soviet Shakespeare purists, who pressured him into reworking it. He also composed—after several years of contemplation—the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, setting canonical Communist texts in such an unusual way as to ensure its official prohibition. The risks were artistic, the repercussions political and financial. Prokofiev disgruntled his ideological overseers, but he sincerely tried to win their approval. He was much less political than patriotic, but he solicited and absorbed the benefits of political patronage, and obligatorily adhered, in interviews and speeches, to the Party line. Unlike his lifelong Soviet colleagues, he received permission to travel abroad in the late 1930s, performing at Soviet diplomatic events in Western Europe and the United States in exchange for coveted exit permits. These trips are summarized in the first and second chapters; for a detailed account of Prokofiev's activities in the West before 1936, readers should consult the biography by David Nice, which is based on research conducted at the London Prokofiev Archive (Goldsmiths College), the principal holding of material about the composer's pre-Soviet career.⁸

In order to secure, or help to secure, commissions, performances, and publications, Prokofiev responded to official directives. However, despite heeding collegial and (more often) noncollegial requests for changes to his scores—simplifying complex harmonies, melodies, and rhythms—he did not, to his mind, forfeit his creative integrity. Prokofiev ascribed much more importance to the moment when musical material was conceived than to its subsequent, mandated reworking. His sketches are not sketches in the usual sense of the term. Invented in the abstract, they are preserved in elegant, legible notation. Prokofiev often jotted down his ideas in pencil and then traced over them in pen, thus preserving them in his notebooks in pristine form. Even when he assigned his melodies to odious political texts, even when he transferred them from one score to another, they retained, in his view, their divine essence. This notion altogether counters the principle, essential to Soviet aesthetics, that music could be tailored to support specific political agendas. The original, nonrepresentational status of the musical gesture seems to have mattered as much or more to Prokofiev than the context in which it was performed or published. To buttress this point, I give much attention in this book to his outlines, sketches, and unrealized compositions.

Invoking, as it does, binaries of matter and spirit, the finite and the infinite, his creative approach might seem ineluctably idealistic, but in one crucial sense it was not. Prokofiev subscribed much less to the problematic notion of musical transcendence than to its opposite: musical groundedness. The

story of his Soviet years is one of an immensely gifted composer who, having rolled the dice on his career to become a public servant, sought to find public outlets and uses for his music. But State interests overshadowed personal ones in the Stalinist era: to solicit and accept commissions for official works, as Prokofiev did, meant setting vulgar verses that promoted falsehoods. For Prokofiev, as for Shostakovich, serving the State was an obligation. It was also, however, a stimulus for the creation of works that sought to elevate and ennoble the listener from a patriotic and spiritual standpoint. Such was the case with his Fifth and Sixth symphonies, the former a success, the latter the target of withering criticism.

In 1936, Prokofiev composed three major works (*Boris Godunov*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *The Queen of Spades*) for the 1937 Pushkin centennial. The first two works were conceived as incidental music for plays, the third for a film, but the cultural climate ensured that none of them ended up being used as intended. The waste of his labor was the first, and clearest, signal that his Soviet career would be fraught, subject to forces beyond his control. Prokofiev succumbed to subtle and not-so-subtle pressures to return to his homeland; the officials who choreographed the courtship, however, promised more than they delivered. In the rest of this introduction, I will discuss the terms of the Faustian bargain: in the eight chapters to follow, I will narrate its consequences.

The story begins on July 21, 1925, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party granted permission for Prokofiev, his rival Stravinsky, and the eminent concert pianist Aleksandr Borovsky to travel to the Soviet Union.⁹ The impetus came from Anatoliy Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Enlightenment, who petitioned Iosif Stalin for permission to travel abroad for the purpose of cultivating cultural relationships with Western European nations, but also to engage with those Berlin- or Paris-based Russian artists, "for example the musicians Prokofiev and Stravinsky," who had achieved "world fame":

These individuals are by no means hostile to us. I receive a lot of letters from them wishing to establish some sort of contact. Isolation from their homeland is obviously undesirable. Some of them might happily return to Russia for good. Others have too many ties abroad and consider themselves basically German, French, and so forth, rather than emigrants. But they would like to come to Russia more often to share the results of their work with us. I have neither the slightest

desire to repatriate emigrants in general nor to repatriate those outstanding individuals who, as emigrants, feel hostile to us. But it would of course be beneficial for those outstanding individuals who have kept themselves away out of misunderstanding or unspecified fear to renew contact with us.¹⁰

Such were the parameters of the task that Lunacharsky assigned himself, and that Stalin evidently approved: to reach out to those first-class talents who might consider relocating to the Soviet Union or, at a minimum, become regular visitors.

In August in Paris, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Borovsky received letters from Nadezhda Bryusova, a member of the Arts Department of the State Academic Council, on instruction of Lunacharsky, specifying the conditions under which they could travel to the RSFSR. Stravinsky and Borovsky ended up rejecting the overture; Prokofiev, in contrast, found it intriguing. Raised in a culture of musical support groups, he experienced feelings of estrangement abroad and sought to reestablish direct personal contact with colleagues in Moscow and Leningrad. Bryusova wrote the following to him:

In response to your address to the Director of the Arts Department of the State Academic Council comrade [Pavel] Novitsky, the People's Commissar for Enlightenment Anatoliy Vasilyevich Lunacharsky instructs me to convey the following to you:

The government agrees to your return to Russia. It agrees to grant you full amnesty for all prior offenses, if any such occurred. It stands to reason that the government cannot grant such amnesty for counter-revolutionary activities in the future. It likewise guarantees complete freedom of travel into and out of the RSFSR as you desire.

I am certain that the entire musical world of our Union will sincerely welcome your return.¹¹

The final lines became, for Prokofiev, the ones that mattered, informing his decision, in May 1926, to accept in principle an invitation from a Moscow concert organizer for a homecoming tour.

Another, specifically musical consequence of Prokofiev's flirtation with the RSFSR was the Constructivist ballet *Le Pas d'Acier* (*The Dance of Steel*), which Prokofiev conceived with the Armenian artist Georgiy Yakulov as a celebration of the metamorphosis of Russian society after the Revolution. The political stakes were great, and Prokofiev fretted from the start that the ballet, which Diaghilev commissioned for the Paris-based Ballets Russes, might be taken for a lampoon by Soviet officials. For *Le Pas d'Acier* to succeed, it needed to be drained of ideology. Prokofiev soon realized, however, that such a nonpolitical work was "impossible, because present-day Russia is defined by the struggle of red against white, and thus a neutral stance won't characterize the moment."¹²

Yakulov convinced him otherwise by stressing that the ballet would unfold in a shape-shifting stage space representing the playground of the imagination. Although set in Russia and referring to developments since the Revolution, the drama would concern not politics but kinetics: the kinship between the workings of the human body and those of machines. The artist conceived *Le Pas d'Acier* as a fantastical construction with three overlapping spheres of action: a market on Sukharevskaya Square in Moscow, an NEP (New Economic Policy) enterprise, and either a factory or an agricultural exhibition—the latter denoting the remaking of Russia. Prokofiev found the conception too vague and prompted Yakulov to recast the ballet in two acts of eleven pantomimic scenes. Set in the years after the Revolution and the subsequent period of famine, the ballet featured stock types drawn from the upper and lower tiers of society who gather at a railway station platform, a symbol of transition. A sailor, the hero of the ballet, meets a coquettish worker girl, the heroine. There ensues an out-of-sync pas de deux, a parody inspired by Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, in which the male and female leads move around each other but do not touch. The stage clears; brigades of shock workers arrive to reconstruct the set, transforming the railway station into a factory. The second half of *Le Pas d'Acier* involved the performers in machine and hammer dances, which culminate in the reunion of the sailor and worker girl in proletarian guise. In a July 29, 1925, diary entry, Prokofiev described the apotheosis as follows:

Suddenly the director of the factory appears and reports that, in view of a lack of money and material, the factory is shutting down. He presents the factory's books. The indignant workers drive out the director. But the facts cannot be

denied: the factory grinds to a halt. A sad meeting: what is to be done? At this time a children's procession announces itself with noise, *gambades*, and clattering percussion. (Yakulov says that this is very characteristic of contemporary Moscow.) The sailor and worker girl accompany the procession. The procession leaves, and the sailor urges the workers not to indulge their sadness, but to take up gymnastic exercises, since the health of the body is the most valuable thing of all. The ballet ends with cheerful gymnastic exercises.¹³

The ballet celebrates harmonious labor, with individual desire subordinated to the collective will; in the end, it proves to be neither about topicality nor ideology, but about dancing—about an idiosyncratic way of being in the modern world.

This, at any rate, was the plan. As Prokofiev sketched the music, which he conceived—at odds with the ballet's storyline—as an exercise in lyricism, Yakulov sketched the décor and choreography. The plans were then submitted to Diaghilev, who decided, after considerable vacillation, that the subject matter might not impress his audiences after all. He entrusted his newest protégé, the young Leonid Massine, with reworking the scenario and inventing the machine dances. The June 7, 1927, premiere performance disappointed Prokofiev.¹⁴ Far from representing the enthusiastic transformation of the old world into the new, the ballet featured a parade of figures from Russian folklore. The new array of scenes devised by Massine—"Baba Yaga and Crocodile," "Street Bazaar and Countesses," "Sailor and Three Devils," "Tomcat and Feline," "Legend of a Drunkard," and "Sailor and Worker Girl"—baffled reviewers. During the industrial bacchanalia of the final scene, the dancers interacted with the décor in loose accord with the original scenario, but the overall effect was less of harmonious labor than of the subjugation, even enslavement of man to machine. In the words of one reviewer:

Men and women in all stages of hurry and perturbation toiled and moiled, shifted heavy weights about, rained steam-hammer blows on huge bars of imaginary steel, tried to look like pistons, connecting rods, cams and differentials, grew hot, and never, never smiled. It was all done in a way that only the mind of a Massine could imagine; and it came off hugely, grimly.¹⁵

Other writers described *Le Pas d'Acier* as a critique of Soviet plans for heavy industrialization, but could not decide if the critique was portentous or capricious. For Prokofiev, who was negotiating concert engagements with Soviet cultural officials, and for Yakulov, who had taken part in the design competition for the Lenin Mausoleum, the violation of their intentions was unsettling. The ballet was a success in Paris and London but, for political as well as aesthetic reasons, it did not receive a Moscow premiere.

Prokofiev's first visit to the Soviet Union, extending from January 19 to March 23, 1927, put to rest the question that had been dogging him since the time of his emigration: whether or not, because he had "‘fled from history,’" his "haggard" homeland would "embrace" him on his return.¹⁶ The reception accorded his performances as a piano soloist with the Philharmonic in Leningrad and in Moscow with Persimfans—the Russian-language acronym for "First (Conductorless) Symphonic Ensemble"—far exceeded his expectations, although he admitted to losing his nerve before walking out onstage for the first event.¹⁷ His other appearances included an orchestra and chamber concert mounted by the Association of Contemporary Music, a cash-strapped bastion of musical modernism, and six engagements in Ukraine. The indisputable highlight of the entire whirlwind affair was a Leningrad performance of his second completed opera, *The Love for Three Oranges*, under the direction of a longtime friend, Sergey Radlov. "I am astonished and delighted with the ingenuity and liveliness of [his] production," Prokofiev wrote in his diary on February 10.¹⁸ By this time, he knew that plans were in the works for a Moscow staging of *The Love for Three Oranges*. Moreover, on February 16, Meyerhold, Radlov's mentor, approached him about directing his first completed opera, *The Gambler*. Prokofiev recalled the event with acerbic wit, noting in passing the service that Meyerhold had provided to Bolshevism:

The honored Red Army soldier is such an important person I am surprised at how little fuss he made about coming to tell me he's agreed to direct *The Gambler*. But perhaps this is because in Paris I was the one who came to see him—to take him to Diaghilev's rehearsals. If the Mariinsky Theater is going to the trouble of getting a big fish like Meyerhold, then the production will go with a bang.¹⁹

Prokofiev found himself weighing proposals for different simultaneous stagings of his operas. It was a unique moment in his otherwise troubled operatic career, and one that he doubtless recalled in the interval between this and his second trip to the Soviet Union.

Upon returning to Paris, Prokofiev began to receive invitations for events at the Soviet Embassy (Plenipotentiary of the Diplomatic Mission), which, unlike the Comintern²⁰ organizations operating in the West, catered to non-Communist interests. He was contacted by Iosif (Ivan) Arens, a counselor with the embassy who had previously headed the press department of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs and served as editor in chief of the French-language daily *Le Journal de Moscou*.²¹ Arens prepared Prokofiev's Soviet travel papers and offered him financial and logistical advice, proposing that he use his earnings in Russian rubles to "build an apartment" for himself in Moscow and "hire Moscow engravers to engrave [his] compositions, if only for [distribution] abroad."²² Prokofiev found the ideas compelling, but his international obligations prevented him from acting on them at the time. He wanted to remain cosmopolitan, fulfilling his contracts with European orchestras and retaining his contacts in the United States. The 1927 visit had been exciting and inspiring, but it also alerted him to the dark side of the workers' paradise. He had received a telephone call in his Moscow hotel room from an unnamed official with Comintern who asked him to participate in a concert celebrating the Communist takeover of Shanghai. Prokofiev managed to avoid the chore, but he found the overture unsettling, noting that "one has to be cautious if the Comintern is mentioned."²³ He knew about Soviet phones being tapped, random interrogations, and people being subject to all manner of bureaucratic humiliation. Through conversations and carefully worded letters, Prokofiev learned of the arrest and imprisonment of his cousin Katya (Yekaterina Rayevskaya), and her subsequent exile in the northwestern Russian town of Kadnikov.²⁴ Musicologist Nataliya Savkina adds here that "friends living in the USSR" asked him for medicine, but he was unable to send it. The terrible side was further revealed in "the vague recollections of acquaintances about people being taken away from work, committing suicide, and disappearing into thin air, no questions asked."²⁵ Another one of Prokofiev's cousins, Shurik (Aleksandr Rayevsky), was also arrested. Upon obtaining his release, he sent the composer a letter that ended with the words "'don't write to me, it's not necessary.'"²⁶

The disquieting news from his relatives doubtless reminded Prokofiev of the benefits of his unsettled Western existence. He was now a Soviet citizen with an external Soviet passport, but at the end of his 1927 visit to the Soviet Union, he renewed his French *certificat d'identité*.²⁷ His uncertain status irritated Soviet officials: in January 1930, for example, he received a stern letter from the Consul General of the USSR instructing him, "as a Soviet citizen," to refute an article in *L'Echo de Paris* that listed him among the Russian émigrés "living and working in Paris."²⁸ Prokofiev's commitment to Paris strengthened when his music unexpectedly came in for scathing ideological critique. Following a concert performance of six numbers from *Le Pas d'Acier* in Moscow in May 1928, hard-line critics and rivals declared that there was "nothing new" in the score, that "it had all been done before," that it was "too noisy," contained "too much of the 'white keys' " (C major), and that it was altogether "'too contrived.'"²⁹ There followed a harangue from the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM), an organization that attempted to be the Bolshevik Party's "mouthpiece for musical policy" while also aspiring "to define that policy."³⁰ In an essay in the RAPM journal, musicologist Yuriy Keldish complained at length about the discord and semantic sameness of the ballet's music. Keldish asserted that, even without the choreography, the score imposed bourgeois capitalist thought onto proletarian subject matter, and thus exhibited a hostile foreign attitude toward Soviet reality.³¹

The ballet did have some supporters in Moscow, chief among them the theater director Meyerhold and the State Academic Bolshoy Theater assistant director Boris Gusman, who both advocated staging *Le Pas d'Acier* with a new cast and choreography. Prokofiev learned of their plans during his second trip to the Soviet Union, from October 20 to November 18, 1929, and supported them in full. On the heels of a November 14 run-through of the score, Gusman proposed enlivening the scene at the bazaar with "giddily, enthusiastically rushing 'red sleighs.'" These sleighs would represent the "old Russian" forms of transport that had been supplanted by "new Russian" trains. Gusman also suggested replacing the three "commissars" with "bandits"—though he was cautioned that this change would contradict the music. For the factory scenes, lastly, Gusman wanted to include "cadres of Five-Year Plan workers."³² Hoping to secure a Moscow staging of the ballet, Prokofiev engaged in repartee with skeptical RAPM representatives. In answer to the question "Why is the entire last part of the ballet shot through with machine-like, mechanical rhythms?" he dryly ad-libbed.

"Because a machine is more beautiful than a man." And when asked whether he believed that the factory scenes depicted "a capitalist factory, where the worker is slave, or a Soviet factory, where the worker is master," he quipped: "This concerns politics, not music, and so I won't respond."³³ His stubborn defense of the ballet (even of Massine's drastic changes) fell largely on deaf ears. *Le Pas d'Acier* did not reach the Soviet stage.

The hostile reaction dismayed and distressed Prokofiev. Beyond ending talk of a Moscow staging of his ballet, it thwarted his nascent campaign to have his beleaguered opera *The Fiery Angel* performed there under Meyerhold's direction.³⁴ Two of Prokofiev's conservatory classmates—the aesthetician, musicologist, and composer Boris Asafyev and the composer Nikolay Myaskovsky—would return to the subject of a Moscow staging of the opera in the mid-1930s, but the result would be the same. Prokofiev remained defiant, attributing the disappointment to the dilettantism of the RAPM rank and file and joking in his diary about the unsuccessful effort to "purge" his music from the Soviet repertoire.³⁵ He took comfort in the favorable reviews of the lavish Bolshoy Theater staging of *The Love for Three Oranges*, which he attended on November 13 and 16, and in the positive reaction to a November 17 concert of his Sinfonietta, First Violin Concerto, and *Overture on Hebrew Themes*. He managed to convince himself that the 1929 trip had been worthwhile: "It's a shame to part from the USSR," he noted in his diary on November 19. "The goal of the trip was obtained: I have certainly, definitely become stronger."³⁶

On April 23, 1932, the Central Committee of the Communist Party mandated the liquidation of proletarian and non-proletarian arts organizations, thus resulting in the formation, first on a municipal and then on a national level, of Kremlin-controlled arts bureaucracies: the Union of Soviet Writers and the Union of Soviet Composers, among others, came into being.³⁷ During the grace period that preceded the establishment, in 1936, of the watchdog All-Union Committee on Arts Affairs (under the control of the Council of People's Commissars), the cultural climate appeared to moderate. Estranged and disgraced artists trusted that their reputations would be restored and the ideological constraints on their activities loosened. Prokofiev responded to the abolition of RAPM with distinct pleasure. Having endured the invective of uncouth opponents, he resolved to establish an authoritative presence in Soviet music. The evolution of his thinking can be gleaned from an October 5, 1932, letter to Myaskovsky—"It is time to come more often and to stay longer," he wrote³⁸—and from a May 2–5, 1933, diary entry:

Lessons with students and several of their awkward attempts to compose something contemporary, and likewise the unsuccessful attempts of proletarian musicians (attempts at simplicity, which does not come easy without technique), and several hints that my music is too complicated for the masses—gave me the idea that what is needed now is to create for the masses in a manner that allows the music to remain good. My previous, melodic pieces and my search for a “new simplicity” have prepared me well for this task.³⁹

By “new simplicity,” Prokofiev was referring to the self-conscious shift in his musical approach that had begun in the mid-1920s. Stephen Press locates the beginning of the change in *Le Pas d'Acier*, specifically the Mozartian lyricism of the pas de deux.⁴⁰ From that point forward, Prokofiev's scores became more tuneful and their intended effect more uplifting. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the composer attributed this new disposition to his religious sentiments. In a December 3, 1932, conversation in Leningrad with the philologist Boris Demchinsky, an old friend, Prokofiev outlined the relationships among faith, music, and positive thinking:

Breakfast with Demchinsky. He tries to mount an attack on cheerfulness and joyfulness. When neither science nor public opinion provides solutions, music should express the general anxiety. I: the more the sea rages, the more precious a hard rock among the waves becomes. He: but no one will understand the meaning of this rock; besides, what is this feeling of calm based on—on health, self-assurance, individual personality? I: on the emphasis on God. He (immediately changing his tone): well, that's a different matter.⁴¹

Here is an aphoristic reworking of Prokofiev's definition of music as a manifestation of the divine. He would soon realize that the creation of art that dissolved ambiguities and contradictions, that invoked a realm beyond the intellect, was not only central to his personal beliefs but also to Soviet aesthetics. Stalinist-era composers proved adept at converting emblems of religious faith into emblems of political faith: “cheerfulness and joyfulness” are staples, however jejunely expressed, of their work.

Between his second and third trips to the Soviet Union while back in France, Prokofiev received insider accounts of cultural events there from visiting Soviet artists. Among them was the playwright Aleksandr Afinogenov, a former Russian Association of Proletarian Writers zealot who repented and became a founding member of the Union of Soviet Writers and—as one learns from the stenograph of his 1932 lecture “The Europe of Our Days”—a chronicler of Russian (Soviet) culture abroad.⁴² (He had been granted an exit permit to conduct research on this topic for a new play.) Although he has not attracted the attention of Prokofiev biographers, Afinogenov exerted considerable influence on the composer during the period when he was assessing potential subjects for his first Soviet-themed opera. He, unlike the other Proletkult figures rumored to have been in contact with Prokofiev in Western Europe, actually befriended the composer.⁴³ Prokofiev regarded Afinogenov (and his American-born wife) as cosmopolitan and street-smart, and he was happy to listen to his advice. The two briefly considered collaborating on a stage work. In a June 16, 1932, diary entry, Prokofiev reports that Afinogenov “would like to write an opera with me. This suits my wishes: it’s time to create a Soviet piece.”⁴⁴ He informed the writer that he wanted the prospective work to have “a constructive rather than a destructive character.” Perhaps recalling unhappy experiences, Prokofiev then changed his mind about writing an opera in the conventional sense of the term and suggested that he and Afinogenov collaborate on a hybrid work: “a play with rhythmic declamation” that would be less operatic and more realistic than even the prose-based operas conceived by Aleksandr Dargomizhsky and Modest Musorgsky in the 1860s. Prokofiev added that he had conceived such a work eight years earlier, in 1924, but competing priorities had prevented it from being realized.

Also in 1932, Prokofiev briefly considered composing background music for Afinogenov’s enormously successful 1931 drama *Fear* (*Strakh*), which addressed the problems experienced by the pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsia in adjusting to post-revolutionary Soviet life. For Prokofiev, the play doubtless had autobiographical resonances, since he was dealing at the time with his own adaptation to Soviet society. “It is a true-to-life play,” he observed, “about the conflict between the old intelligentsia (those who are prepared to work with Soviet authorities) and the new administrative workers, who are less cultured but more energetic.”⁴⁵ The precise reasons for the aborting of this project are unknown, but may relate to the Soviet cultural climate. In his notebook from this period, Afinogenov commented:

“Prokofiev plans to travel to the USSR in the fall; to go there now is not as unpleasant, RAPM is no longer, but I am all the same afraid of what will happen to [him], and what musicians’ sentiments will be like, after the transition.”⁴⁶

When the time—and mood—was right, the task of convincing Prokofiev to relocate to Moscow fell to Levon Atovmyan, a music official, editor, and publisher who came to play an enormous role in the lives of Soviet composers following his appointment, in 1940, as Director and Deputy Chairman of Muzfond, the financial division of the Union of Soviet Composers.⁴⁷ Even by the chaotic norms of the Stalinist era, Atovmyan led a turbulent career. A native of Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, he enlisted in the Red Army in 1919, working as a political instructor and the editor of a division newspaper. He contracted typhus in 1920 and received a permanent discharge; following his convalescence, he worked in the offices of the Bolshoy Theater for his benefactor Lunacharsky; there, among other tasks, he arranged concerts for workers at factory and institute social clubs. In 1925 he relocated to Tbilisi, Georgia, and resumed his interrupted musical education (he had studied cello and music theory in Moscow before enlisting) and worked in an experimental theater. In 1930 he was elected to the presidium of the All-Russia Society of Composers and Dramatists (then led by Afinogenov) and appointed executive secretary of the Composers’ Division. In 1934 he became a theater administrator and briefly worked for Meyerhold. He thereafter returned to Ashkhabad, where he directed the local government cultural affairs department until his arrest in 1937 in a bureaucratic scandal. The reasons for his arrest remain obscure. His sentence was commuted in 1940 and his official status regained. Atovmyan returned to Moscow, working first for State Radio and then, most crucially, for Muzfond.

In his memoirs, which he completed in enfeebled retirement, Atovmyan recalls a 1932 summons to the NKID (Narodniy Komissariat Inostrannikh Del, the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) to meet with the director of the Western European and North American Division:

[The official] ordered coffee and pastries, invited me to the table and began to talk about our concerts in the Bolshoy Theater. In the discussion I was given to understand that it would be good to correspond with those musicians abroad, namely Prokofiev, Koussevitzky, Malko, and Pyatigorsky, who had taken part in these concerts and, if possible,

try to convince them of the merits of moving to the Soviet Union.⁴⁸

Atovmyan sent letters to the first three people on the list; the cellist Gregor Pyatigorsky was excluded. Serge Koussevitzky, the conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, did not reply, and Nikolay Malko, the conductor of the Danish State Radio Orchestra, agreed to visit for additional concerts, but insisted on returning abroad. Prokofiev, in contrast,

answered very positively, but with the qualification that he was overloaded with concerts and would thus provide the actual date of his arrival a little later. They told me at *Narkomindel* not to answer Malko but to continue writing to Prokofiev, adding that if he agreed to stay in Moscow he would be offered a private residence (later they showed me a two-story private residence on the Garden Ring Road). I received a second and a third letter from Prokofiev, in which he articulated his desires concerning the programs of the planned concerts and performances, and the orchestral parts he was sending by registered book post. In lieu of this the planned program of the next concert of Soviet music was redone and now looked as follows: the Classical Symphony, the Fifth Piano Concerto, and the “Four Portraits” Symphonic Suite from *The Gambler*.⁴⁹

Atovmyan ended his recollection by noting that “the entire musical (and not only musical) community lived in expectation of this concert and meeting with Prokofiev.”

This and other concerts took place in Moscow and Leningrad during Prokofiev’s third visit to the Soviet Union in late November and early December of 1932. He was hailed by the conductors and musicians with whom he performed, solicited for interviews and, despite informing Atovmyan that he disliked formal occasions, feted at a banquet at the National Hotel in Moscow and at a Congress of Arts Workers (*S’yezd rabotnikov iskusstv*) in Leningrad. His recollection of this latter event, which occurred on November 30, finds him flattered—if somewhat mystified—by the attention:

I am greeted with applause; thank God, I might not have to give a speech. They photograph me and draw my picture. We go to the Mikhaylovsky Theater, where composers and musicians have organized a reception in the foyer. Atovmyan telegraphed from Moscow that "Prokofiev hates ceremonial gatherings." Some seventy people in all. A speech by Iokhelson who, I just then realized, is the former chairman of the Leningrad branch of proletarian musicians. He says approximately what I wanted to say at the Congress: about the thriving interest in music, about the appeal of having me working on Soviet themes and creating ties with the Western musical world. All of this in a terrible flattering form: Sergey Sergeyevich this and Sergey Sergeyevich that.⁵⁰

In his response, Prokofiev simply echoed Vladimir Iokhelson's points. His concluding statement "to the effect that I am planning to spend as much time here as possible" was "greeted with protracted applause." There followed a question-and-answer session, which Prokofiev deemed "friendly and factual, not treacherous as in 1929."

Atovmyan recalls that, in between the concerts, he arranged to speak with the composer about

business affairs; I found out during the conversation that [Prokofiev] had been obliged over the course of the year to give about 100 concerts and to compose in snatches, primarily on the train. Because of this he had to get used to writing [instrumental works] as piano scores and marking the instrumentation on them. When I suggested settling in Moscow he replied: "You should understand that I feel constrained in one country: even if I have 4-5 concerts in Moscow, Leningrad, or supposedly Kiev, Baku, and Tbilisi—that's the maximum I can have. I'll die here of starvation." "You won't die," I replied, "We'll guarantee you commissions for creative work." He took an interest in these commissions and, hearing the details, said: "Yes, it's worth thinking about your offer."⁵¹

Atovmyan appends that Myaskovsky and the music critic (and future Prokofiev assistant) Vladimir Derzhanovsky both lent heft to the discussions about his prospective relocation. The forty-four letters and telegrams exchanged by Atovmyan and Prokofiev between 1932 and 1934 attest to the seriousness of the recruitment effort. A letter from May 4, 1933, finds Atovmyan meticulously tending to the logistics of Prokofiev's latest visit to the Soviet Union. Having "heard rumors" that the composer "needed money," Atovmyan promises to promptly arrange a bank transfer for him. He then invites Prokofiev to a May 6 concert at the Bolshoy Theater, provides him with the details of his May 8 departure from Moscow to Tiflis (Tbilisi), and reminds him that "today at 6 o'clock" he would be giving a speech at the Composers' Union. On May 7, Atovmyan adds, the Moscow Philharmonic would be repeating its April 27 concert of Prokofiev's music, albeit without additional rehearsals. "I hoped to see you yesterday at the theater," he concludes, "but you were so closely surrounded by women and photographers that I fled in fear."⁵²

During this period, Prokofiev received the first of the "guaranteed" Soviet commissions. It came from Gusman, who had lost his post at the Bolshoy Theater but had found a new one at Belorussian State Cinema—Belgoskino—which operated in Leningrad between 1928 and 1939. Like Atovmyan, Gusman careened from job to job in the 1930s;⁵³ also like Atovmyan, he supported Prokofiev financially and creatively, commissioning several scores from him and forwarding him potential ballet and opera subjects.⁵⁴ On December 2, 1932, in Leningrad, he approached Prokofiev with an offer to write a film score. The composer showed interest—although according to one source the interest was lukewarm⁵⁵—and the next day he, Gusman, the scenarist and literary theorist Yuriy Tityanov, and the director Aleksandr Fayntsimmer met for several hours to hammer out the details.⁵⁶

Titled *Lieutenant Kizhe*, the film was based on a novella written by Tityanov in 1927, which was itself based on a well-known anecdote about Tsar Pavel I, the irascible and manic son of Catherine the Great, who reigned for just five years, 1796–1801, before being murdered.⁵⁷ The clique that killed him circulated the rumor that he was mentally unbalanced. The anecdote, which comes from a 1901 publication, concerns the creation at Pavel's court "of a nonexistent officer by a scribal error, and the demise of a living one 'for the same reason.'"⁵⁸ Tityanov transformed the anecdote into a Gogolian satire about the absurdities of late eighteenth-century bureaucracy, which necessitated the interpretation of the letter, rather than the spirit, of

the law to black comic ends. The film shows, near the start, a flustered young scribe writing up a regimental order for the tsar. Interrupted by an impatient aide-de-camp—who raps (“k k k”) on the window—the scribe erroneously writes “Poruchik Kizhe” (Lieutenant Kizhe) on the order instead of “Poruchiki zhe” (while the lieutenants). The mistake cannot be undone: the fictitious officer must be reckoned with, accounted for, bundled and trundled away—so he is assigned to a guard post, blamed for waking the napping tsar, flogged and sent by foot to Siberia, restored to honor on a technicality, summoned back to St. Petersburg, married to a lovely maid-in-waiting (she stands at the altar alone, with an adjutant holding the nuptial crown over the head of her unseen groom), and sires a son. At the end of his career, he earns promotions to the rank of colonel and general, falls gravely ill with fever, dies, and receives a burial with full honors.

Beyond being a sociopolitical satire, *Lieutenant Kizhe* reflects Tinyanov's fascination with phonetic mutations and the manner that cinema, like poetry, traffics in apparent rather than concrete meanings.⁵⁹ The film involves frequent changes in perspective, representations of empty spaces, and distorted reflections. Images of soldiers and sweepers are doubled and quadrupled. The soundtrack teems, like the mind of a schizophrenic, with disembodied voices, sentence fragments, and isolated phonemes. Kizhe becomes a mirror image of Pavel I, an absent leader inhabiting a power vacuum. Prokofiev captures this sentiment in his score by surrounding Pavel I and his courtiers with hollow fanfares and stylized songs. Their music is no more subjective than that of the eponymous hero, who does not exist as a subject. Just as the film comments on its own status as fiction through the marionette-like behavior of its actors, so too does the music, which accompanies the visual representation of late eighteenth-century St. Petersburg with an anachronistic blend of modal and diatonic melodies. Given that tales about St. Petersburg tend to highlight the city's theatrical, artificial look, the inauthenticities in the film could be interpreted as oddly authentic.

Prokofiev composed the score in piecemeal, protracted fashion. Between mid-December 1932 and mid-April 1933, he traveled to France for the premiere of his ballet *On the Dnieper* (*Sur le Borysthène*) and then to the United States for a series of concerts. He returned to the Soviet Union on April 14 for an eleven-week stay. Lina joined him on May 6. It was her first visit to the Soviet Union since 1927.

The trip would involve residencies in Moscow, Leningrad, and two weeks of engagements, arranged by the ever-attentive Atovmryan, in the Caucasus.

On April 22, Prokofiev visited the set of *Lieutenant Kizhe* for the first time, and his recollection of the experience suggests that it had been underwhelming. He found Belgoskino “curious,” and assailed both the training of the actors and their “manner of speech,” contending that American acting was “more natural.” He appreciated the fact that a “party” was organized after the final “cut,” but he resented having to sit at the piano and perform for a newsreel: “The light is blinding and the spotlights are hot. It drags on. I play parts of my Toccata badly, but there is no time to redo them. I go home and sleep.”⁶⁰ The unhappiness of this experience reflected Prokofiev’s dissatisfaction both with the method of acting used in *Lieutenant Kizhe* and the state of early sound recording technology—a dissatisfaction that would be echoed by the film’s reviewers. It did not lessen his interest in collaborating with Tinyanov and Fayntsimmer, although the collaboration would end up demanding much more of his time than he could give.

The score for *Lieutenant Kizhe* includes seventeen short numbers ranging from 15 to 105 seconds in length, excluding repeats. Encouraged by Fayntsimmer, Prokofiev first wrote two songs—“Pavel’s Song” and “Gagarina’s Song”—for the film. The former imitates a children’s clapping song and the latter uses the words and parodies the style of an eighteenth-century romance by Fyodor Dubyansky.⁶¹ No sooner had they been completed than Prokofiev learned that the actor chosen to play Pavel I, Mikhaíl Yanshin, was tone deaf.⁶² His discordant singing ended up enhancing the imbecility of “Pavel’s Song,” but it posed a logistical problem for “Gagarina’s Song,” which Prokofiev conceived in part as a salon-style vocal duet with harp accompaniment. Prokofiev and Lina, a trained soprano, both agreed to have their voices recorded for the film—the actress playing Princess Anna Gagarina, Nina Shaternikova, also seems to have had trouble holding a tune—but, save for several ghostly echoes in the background scoring, the duet ended up on the cutting room floor.

Prokofiev composed the bulk of the score in Paris between July and September 1933, forwarding it in installments to Fayntsimmer with instructions as to how the numbers could be lengthened or shortened to facilitate the editing and sound recording processes.⁶³ He finished the orchestration at Belgoskino on October 21. By this time, to his disappointment, the film had been reworked, with certain scenes added and others removed. Some of the changes were decided upon by Fayntsimmer, whose conception of *Lieutenant Kizhe* differed from that of Tinyanov.⁶⁴ Others were mandated by a government commission dedicated to the correction of ideological

deficiencies in Soviet cinema.⁶⁵ Prokofiev summed up the state of affairs as follows:

On returning to Moscow I eagerly set to work on the music for *Lieutenant Kizhe*. I somehow had no doubts whatever about the musical language for this film. I went to Leningrad for the recording of the score....Unfortunately the ending was altered so many times that the film became confused and heavy as a result. The following year I made a symphonic suite out of the music. This gave me much more trouble than the music for the film itself, since I had to find the proper form, re-orchestrate the whole thing, polish it up and even combine several of the themes.⁶⁶

The changes to the film did not affect the music, which, with the exception of the two songs, Prokofiev essentially conceived as an asynchronic background to the visuals. For the symphonic suite, he rescored the two songs for full orchestra. (The choice of timbre is perhaps the most crucial element of the score: the flute, a conventional bearer of sincere feeling, can be interpreted as maintaining the fiction of Kizhe's existence while the mocking, disrupting alto saxophone, on which Prokofiev lavished great care, seeks to expose it.)

The now-obscure film was a modest success both in the Soviet Union and abroad, but its unevenness proved to be fodder for ideological critique. Fayntsimmer described the critical response positively in a February 17, 1934, letter to the composer, noting that the "closed showings" in Moscow provoked "laughter and applause; in Leningrad, as always, the reaction was rather more restrained, but a good impression overall."⁶⁷ Nikolay Otten set the tone for the reviews in a January 10, 1934, piece in the newspaper *Kino*—heaping praise on Tinyanov's novella while accusing Fayntsimmer of transforming a historical lampoon with phantasmagoric tendencies into an anachronistic vaudeville. Otten chided Yanshin for his maniacal impersonation of Pavel I, but lauded Erast Garin for his Buster Keaton-like realization of the adjutant. For Belgoskino, Otten added, the film represented a creative and thematic setback but a significant technological achievement.⁶⁸

Almost the same points were made by A. Petrovich, a reviewer for the official Soviet government newspaper *Izvestiya*, who commented that "in certain episodes of the film...the director had recourse to the grotesque,

to merciless satire. But this was only in certain episodes; overall, the film is less modeled on a historical lampoon than on an operatic spectacle, a costumed concert." Prokofiev's "satiric, piquant" music "further underscored the thematic incongruities of the cinematic realization."⁶⁹ In essence, and in the opinion of two other critics, *Lieutenant Kizhe* "is a curious picture, worthy of attention, however it lies outside the mainstream of Soviet cinematographic development."⁷⁰ In later years, Prokofiev would seek both to occupy this mainstream and to define it. His greatest initial Soviet success would come in the realm of cinema.

Beyond the *Lieutenant Kizhe* commission, 1933 brought Prokofiev renewed promises of operatic commissions and productions from his Soviet backers. His discordant *Scythian Suite* and Third Symphony received well-intentioned performances. Prokofiev relished the attention given to the nettlesome scores by the Leningrad Philharmonic but blanched at the result:

General rehearsal. The 3rd Symphony is thoroughly bad.

I grapple with the orchestra inspector:

It sounds like cows hauling a manure cart up a mountain.

He: Our orchestra was the first in the USSR.

I: To be the first in the USSR doesn't give you the right to play worse than they do abroad.⁷¹

Further, modest evidence that Prokofiev's approach—old and new—to composition would be indulged, rather than challenged, in the post-RAPM era came from the Moscow Conservatory, whose faculty invited him to become a "consultant" professor, the expectation being that he would advise advanced students nearing the end of the program of study. He accepted the position on May 27, 1933, and held it until March 22, 1937. Though his schedule blocked him from holding regular office hours, he tracked the progress of gifted students and commented on their progress in a notebook.⁷² There is reason to suspect that after his permanent move to Moscow he neglected his duties: his file at the Conservatory claims "dismissal on account of the absence of a pedagogical load."⁷³

Prokofiev's trips to the Soviet Union in spring, summer, and fall of 1934 included discussions with the writer Maxim Gorky (pseudonym of Aleksey Peshkov). Gorky served as the first chairman of the Union of Soviet Writers, whose constitution required its members to convene every three years

to formulate policy and elect a presidium and secretariat. The first congress in August 1934, which Prokofiev did not attend, introduced the tenets of the official artistic doctrine of Socialist Realism and buttressed the rhetorical foundations of Stalinist cultural discourse. Prokofiev and Gorky had encountered each other at least twice before (in 1917 in Petrograd on the eve of the February Revolution and in 1926 in Sorrento during the period of Gorky's Italian sojourn). The writer, an ardent backer of (and fund-raiser for) the Bolshevik cause, disputed Lenin's political thought and despotic methods, especially his repression of intellectuals. Despite being even more repressive, Stalin managed to persuade Gorky to return to Moscow in 1928 for a triumphant, government-sponsored sixtieth-birthday celebration that named him the Soviet Union's preeminent public intellectual. He returned to Italy after the celebration, but visited the Soviet Union again in 1929 and 1932. Following his permanent return in 1933, he was forbidden from traveling abroad (in this respect Gorky's biography parallels Prokofiev's). Owing to his outspokenness and frequent clashes with officials, the circumstances behind his death in 1936 from heart failure have long been a subject of debate.⁷⁴

Prokofiev eulogized Gorky on a June 19, 1936, Moscow radio broadcast. His remarks were trifling, but he recalled asking the writer for his thoughts on the type of music he should compose "for the new stage of socialist construction." The melodic streamlining of his style in the 1920s had fostered the composition of "cheerful and energetic" music, but Gorky suggested that it also needed to be "heartfelt and tender."⁷⁵ In a notebook, Prokofiev recalled the discussion in a more nuanced light, commenting that when he asked Gorky's counsel, the grizzled writer was "momentarily taken aback" but then opined that the Soviet people valued "goodness and strength, and therefore understand lyricism and feeling."⁷⁶ Although it remains a matter of speculation, it would seem that Prokofiev perceived his role in Soviet musical life as paralleling Gorky's role in Soviet literary life: he would be the lodestar of musical progress, improving and upholding standards in a fertile musical culture.

Prokofiev offered his thoughts on what he regarded as the proper course of Soviet music to *Izvestiya*. The November 16, 1934, article in question, "The Paths of Soviet Music," combined Party-speak with cautious, quasi-Tolstoyan pronouncements about artistic value. Prokofiev begins by noting the need, in the Soviet sphere, for "great music" corresponding "both in form and in content to the grandeur of the epoch." This music, he continues,

“would be a stimulus to our own musical development, and abroad too it would reveal our true selves.” Then a gentle rebuke (intended, perhaps, for RAPM dead-enders): “The danger of becoming provincial is unfortunately a very real one for modern Soviet composers.”

Having noted the value of his own dual (internal and external) perspective on Soviet music, Prokofiev establishes that serious art need not be complex art, and innovation need not result in alienation:

I believe the type of music needed is what one might call “light-serious” or “serious-light” music. It is by no means easy to find the right idiom for such music. It should be primarily melodious, and the melody would be clear and simple without, however, becoming repetitive or trivial. Many composers find it difficult enough to compose any sort of melody, let alone a melody having some definite function to perform. The same applies to the technique, the form—it too must be clear and simple, but not stereotyped. It is not the old simplicity that is needed but a new kind of simplicity. And this can be achieved only after the composer has mastered the art of composing serious, significant music, thereby acquiring the technique of expressing himself in simple, yet original terms.⁷⁷

Prokofiev here renounces *enfant terrible* brashness: harmonic substitutions and chromatic displacements would continue to define his style, but its traditional tonal foundations would become more explicit. Prokofiev suggests, in the mildest of terms, that composers seeking to expand and extend the diatonic system must at least familiarize themselves with its antitheses. His own dalliances with dodecaphony and octatonicism, and his much more sustained exploration of poly-modality, had enriched the emotional and spiritual content of his scores without reducing them to technical studies. Prokofiev was not a system-dependent composer (hence the challenge he poses to music theorists): the spontaneity of the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic shifts in his scores suggests an artist seeking to capture the moment of creative inspiration and then transfer it unmediated to his listeners. The “path” he proposed for Soviet music might be roughly likened to the path Lev Tolstoy chose for all art in a 1898 manifesto (*What Is Art?*): “The art of our time, in order to be art, must bypass science and make its own path,

or else take direction from the unacknowledged science that is rejected by scientific orthodoxy.”⁷⁸

“The Paths of Soviet Music” marked the beginning of Prokofiev’s absorption into Soviet cultural and political affairs. He remained, however, more a spectator of than a participant in those affairs, reacting to what he saw on the streets and read in the newspapers of Moscow and Leningrad with tourist-like wonder, offering, for example, an entertaining account of the May Day parade he attended in the Soviet capital in 1933:

Atovmyan took it upon himself to get a ticket for me for the reviewing stand on Red Square to see the parade, but he made a mess of things, failing to get the ticket and then disappearing for five days, which ended up being more embarrassing than if he had stayed around. I watched from the corner window of my room. Tanks arrived at 5 in the morning. At 9 I tried to enter the square, but it was cordoned off everywhere and difficult to move, so I ended up back in the hotel. I was astonished by the airplanes: on my count 250 of them flew past, but they said 600. The tanks also shook the glass, but they say that one of them broke down right in front of the reviewing stand, unable to move forward or back. The most interesting thing: the processions of demonstrators. Beneath my window two ribbons (one from Gorky Street, the other from the Bolshoy Theater) merged like pavement onto pavement at the lower end of Gorky Street. They also say that from 11:30 to 5:30 on Red Square, people marched in formation in rows of eighty. From above the bright red scarves and hats of the women looked very beautiful. These were exchanged now and then for white and colored ones. A sea of banners and placards, predominantly red. An endless number of bands, which played a march, then something cheerful, then [the popular song] “Marusya Took Poison.”⁷⁹

Prokofiev maintained his distance from Soviet exotica in the early 1930s, but it thereafter became clear to him that he could not continue to count on Soviet patronage while residing abroad. Just as the cultural exchanges that had followed the dissolution of the proletarian organizations would dwindle

after 1934, so, too, would Prokofiev's ability to reside contentedly outside of his homeland. The open borders agreement came with an expiration date.

Ever cognizant of the "task" that the NKID had "assigned" to him, Atovmyan continued to encourage Prokofiev to move to Moscow, and Prokofiev continued to warm to the idea.⁸⁰ ("When you come to the USSR," the composer generalized, "the first impression is of uncouthness, but under this uncouthness you begin to discern interesting, inspiring people.")⁸¹ Because his published diary ends in 1933, much remains unknown about his thinking as he contemplated the paths between Paris and Moscow. Chapter 1 of this book offers more details about his decision, confirming that he conceived it less as repatriation than relocation. He tried, as long as he could, to keep his options open. Committed to sustaining a positive outlook that denied any finality or legitimacy to evil, he could not have imagined that his future career would be immortalized—and trivialized—in history textbooks as a parable about the traumatic upheavals of twentieth-century life.

An anecdote about a Moscow concert on May 25, 1933, in one of Prokofiev's final published diary entries, reads like a premonition: "Near the end of the entr'acte, Ptashka glanced at the loge and met eyes with Stalin, who had just then entered. His gaze was so intense that she immediately turned away."⁸² *Ptashka*, or "little bird," was Prokofiev's nickname for his wife. In the years ahead, the composer's inner confidence would be no match for the tragic confidence of that malevolent stare. At the time, though, the future looked bright; it was a wonderful time to be alive.

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DropBooks

Plans Gone Awry, 1935–1938

Vladimir Potyomkin, a historian who joined the Bolshevik movement after the Revolution, served as Soviet ambassador to Paris from 1934 to 1937 and as Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs from 1937 to 1940. A leading figure in Soviet foreign policy during the 1930s, he brokered a mutual support pact between the Soviet Union and France, and participated in the deliberations that resulted in the signing of a nonaggression pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in 1939. He dedicated much of his time to convincing prominent Paris-based Russians—the former general Count Aleksandr Ignatyev, for example, and the writer Aleksandr Kuprin—to relocate to Moscow and Leningrad.¹ Potyomkin played a leading role in persuading Prokofiev, a frequent guest at his residence, to complete the same move. Lina recalled Potyomkin “ma[king] many promises” to the composer “about the privileges awaiting him in the Soviet Union.”² These included housing, commissions, performances, and income that would relieve him of the need to tour. Potyomkin iterated what Atovmyan, working at the behest of the NKID, had offered to Prokofiev. The promises began to be fulfilled even before the composer relocated. The year 1935 was one of the most lucrative of his career, the bulk of his income coming from Soviet sources.

Prokofiev had been delaying the move for several years, and he might not have relocated at all had he not been pressured. From the perspective of the French authorities, Prokofiev was a Soviet citizen with an external Soviet passport, yet he maintained his *certificat d'identité*. He routinely renewed both documents—the passport and the *certificat*—through written requests

to the appropriate government bodies: the Central Executive Committee of the USSR³ and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.⁴ Evidence of his hesitation about wholly departing France comes from his confidant Gabriel Paitchadze, the manager of the Paris office of Édition Russe de Musique:

S. S. vacillated for quite a long time about leaving Paris and settling in Soviet Russia. He often talked with me about this. He was drawn on the one hand to his native soil and to the Russian public, but on the other hand, it was difficult for him to come to terms with such a radical change in his life. He had become accustomed to European comforts and his wife L. I. was such a European woman that it was difficult to imagine her in a Soviet context. There was also the question of the upbringing of his sons, who had just begun their studies in Paris and would have to change schools.⁵

Then the essential point:

The vacillation between the West and the East would have continued for even longer if he had not been given to understand within Soviet circles that he had to bring his dual existence to an end and relocate to Russia and become an official Soviet composer. In sum, he would no longer be permitted to take trips to Russia. When the situation became clear to him, S. S. finally resolved to relocate for good and, at the beginning of 1936, they [Prokofiev and Lina] liquidated their Paris apartment and settled in Moscow, bringing some of their furniture and their automobile along with them.⁶

To decline the invitation to return would have been to sacrifice the commissions for the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, the score for a filmed version of *The Queen of Spades*, and incidental music for productions of *Boris Godunov* and *Eugene Onegin*. This Prokofiev could not do. To assure him that he would not have to forfeit his international career, Potyomkin, according to Paitchadze, told Prokofiev that “he would be allowed annual foreign concert tours, and likewise the right to earn foreign royalties and concert fees.”⁷

The decision was finalized in the summer of 1935, when Prokofiev for the first time brought his entire family to the RSFSR. They stayed together in Polenovo, the summer retreat of the Bolshoy Theater collective, with Prokofiev working in solitude in a stand-alone cottage and the rest of the family, who arrived after him, residing in the main building. Recreation included swimming in the Oka River, playing tennis and volleyball, and fraternizing with celebrated dancers and singers.⁸ It was here, in a very brief time span, that Prokofiev composed *Romeo and Juliet*, a ballet about clandestine love that bears, in and of itself, a clandestine history.⁹ Its path to the stage was extremely difficult. Prokofiev ascribed its negative initial reception to archaic tastes in choreography (Soviet ballet clung to the kind of melodramatic pantomime that Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes had abandoned) and old-fashioned approaches to Shakespeare (remarkably, the first version of the ballet featured a happy rather than a tragic ending). The composer perhaps delighted in the challenge of upending common practice, but cultural and political forces thwarted his ambitions. It took several years and much difficult revision before *Romeo and Juliet* became the greatest success of his career.

The Happy Ending

The conception of this (now) celebrated but (then) controversial work dates to late November 1934, when Prokofiev traveled to Leningrad to discuss prospective performances of his operas *The Gambler* and *The Fiery Angel* at the State Academic Theater of Opera and Ballet.¹⁰ He arrived from Moscow, where he had been attending rehearsals of *Egyptian Nights*—a hybridized staging, by Aleksandr Tairov (real surname Kornblit), of scenes from Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and a Pushkin poem for which Prokofiev composed incidental music. According to a 1934 diary fragment, Prokofiev met with Asafyev and the dramatist and artistic director of the Lenfilm studios Adrian Piotrovsky to evaluate the prospects for *The Gambler* and *The Fiery Angel* in Leningrad.¹¹ They also assessed potential subjects for a new dramatic work. These included Pushkin's *The Blackamoor of Peter the Great*, an unfinished historical novel and proxy biography about the poet's great-grandfather. "If [it is to be] *Blackamoor*," Prokofiev informed his colleagues, "then [it will be] a ballet." Piotrovsky liked the idea; Asafyev did not. The latter was basking in the glow of the positive reviews of his Orientalist ballet *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*, and perhaps

feared losing the spotlight to Prokofiev. Following a trip to Moscow for the opening of *Egyptian Nights*, Prokofiev returned to Leningrad for additional brainstorming. “A get-together at Asafyev’s,” he wrote in a notebook. “I critiqued *Blackamoor*—too little material. We searched for a lyrical subject. Piotrovsky threw out [the names of] several classics including *Romeo and Juliet*. I immediately blurted out: a better [subject] cannot be found.”¹²

Further details of the discussions come from Prokofiev’s annotated 1951–52 work list.¹³ Before recommending *Romeo and Juliet*, Piotrovsky proposed two other love stories: Maurice Maeterlinck’s Symbolist drama *Pelléas et Mélisande* and Gottfried von Strassburg’s epic *Tristan und Isolde*. To work with either of these texts would have been to contend with the operatic specters of Debussy and Wagner. By settling on *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev joined the more agreeable (for him) company of Bellini, Berlioz, Chaikovsky, and Gounod. Once the decision was reached, he began to discuss the scenario with the innovative and influential director Radlov, a longtime friend. In April 1934, Radlov had mounted a stripped-down, unsentimental version of *Romeo and Juliet* with young actors at his Studio Theater in Leningrad. Prokofiev saw the production on tour in Moscow and admired its contrapuntal juxtaposition of comic and tragic scenes.

The scenario for Prokofiev’s treatment of the drama passed through different hands and different drafts. The first five-act draft, dated January 1935, survives in the London Prokofiev Archive; a second four-act draft, dated May 16, 1935, is preserved at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. Prokofiev appears to have written the first draft himself in Paris and then turned it over to Piotrovsky and Radlov in Leningrad for their input. Noëlle Mann, who translated and published this document, remarks that it is unclear whether Prokofiev used an English-language edition of Shakespeare’s play, a Russian-language edition, “or both.”¹⁴ It is also unclear whether this first version was intended for a ballet: it reads like an opera script.

On May 17, 1935, the Leningrad Komsomol¹⁵ newspaper *Smena* (Change of Work Shift) released a habitually terse statement from Prokofiev about his work on *Romeo and Juliet*.¹⁶ He reveals that the State Academic Theater had encouraged the creation of the ballet, yet an agreement had not been finalized. He does not indicate the reason for the turnabout, but it was likely tied to the infighting at the State Academic Theater that followed Radlov’s extremely bitter resignation as its artistic director on June 22, 1934.¹⁷ Vladimir Mutnikh, the new administrative director of the Bolshoy Theater in Moscow, acquired the ballet a year later with the understanding that

Piotrovsky would remain involved as scenarist, and Radlov as both scenarist and director.¹⁸ Radlov offered his general thoughts on the chain of events in an August 8, 1935, letter to Prokofiev:

As before, I think ahead with enormous interest and happiness to that time when it will be possible to begin staging your wonderful ballet. Please inform Vl. Iv. Mutnikh, if he's still in Polenovo, that I haven't yet signed the contract for the libretto *only* because I must consult with Adr. Piotrovsky about it. Meanwhile I'm not sure when and where I'll see him. In essence, however, nothing has changed because of this. That is, in the area of ballet I feel not the slightest surge of Leningrad patriotism. To the contrary, I'm more than loyally disposed to the Bolshoy Theater.¹⁹

With Mutnikh committed to *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev moved ahead on the assumption that, following an official hearing, it would be produced by the Bolshoy Theater in the spring of 1936. He worked on the music through the idyllic summer of 1935, finishing the piano score on September 8 and the orchestral score on October 1. Alterations and refinements extended into the late fall, when he was on tour in Morocco and Algeria. Insight into the creative process comes from two letters, the first to Vera Alpers, a St. Petersburg Conservatory classmate and lifelong friend, and the second to Myaskovsky. To Alpers, Prokofiev reported that the score involved fifty-eight numbers, “a list painstakingly worked out and annotated during my stay in Leningrad, and nothing gives me greater pleasure than putting a cross beside a composed number (a black cross if the music is conceived in principle and a red cross if the number is composed and written out).”²⁰ To Myaskovsky, he bemoaned the time it took to work up the orchestration. “I am maintaining a pace of about 20 pages a day . . . but it is hard and the main thing is to avoid succumbing to Asafyevism, that is to say, the path of least resistance.”²¹ Such was the path evidently taken by Asafyev in *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*, which Prokofiev obviously disliked, but whose success he at least hoped to replicate in *Romeo and Juliet*—even to the extent of consulting the same choreographer: Radlov's pupil Rostislav Zakharov.²²

Prokofiev's full-time work on the ballet, and his signing of a contract to compose the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, provided him leverage to petition Mossovet (the Moscow Council of Worker, Peasant,

and Red Army Deputies—essentially City Hall) for permanent housing. Atovmyan had, of course, offered a two-story private residence on the Garden Ring Road, but Prokofiev declared that he “could not afford it” (ne po moemu karmanu).²³ He briefly considered inhabiting an apartment in the composers’ residence then being built, but progress was slow and the thought of living alongside his colleagues did not appeal to him. Tired of living out of suitcases, Prokofiev on November 11, 1935, wrote to the chairman of the Executive Committee of Mossovet, Nikolay Bulganin, requesting an alternate arrangement:

I have been commissioned by the Bolshoy Theater for a four-act ballet on Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, and by the Radio Committee for a large-scale cantata to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet accession to power, about which V. I. Mutnikh and P. M. Kerzhentsev have already written to you. There is no point in undertaking such commissions unless they can be fulfilled to the very highest standards. At present, I do not have suitable conditions for working in peace, because I do not have a flat in Moscow. When I was living abroad, everyone told me (and quite rightly) that I ought to work in the Soviet Union; but when I arrived in Moscow, the more or less general opinion seemed to be: Prokofieff’s used to traveling, so let him live out of his suitcase while he’s here....

Please do not refuse this request made on behalf of myself and my family for a quiet flat in Moscow, where I can concentrate on the aforementioned pieces. The present situation has become bizarre; in fact, it is almost like something out of a story when a Soviet composer is forced to live abroad to work on pieces commissioned by major Soviet institutions, because there is no room for him in welcoming Moscow!²⁴

Prokofiev was promised an apartment for the spring, but did not receive it until the summer. For the time being, he lived and worked in temporary lodging.

Forces had already begun to align themselves against *Romeo and Juliet*. The October 4, 1935, run-through of the piano score at the Bolshoy Theater

did not impress the audience. The conductor Yuriy Fayer, who served as Prokofiev's page-turner, described the event in grim terms, noting that the hall emptied out as the performance wore on. "When Sergey Sergeyevich finished playing, it became clear that there would be no adjudication: there was simply nobody to do it. This was an unexpected and hard blow to the composer."²⁵ Fayer, an ill-tempered conductor with a tin ear, deemed the music convoluted.

The rhythmic writing occasioned general critique for its terseness, the harmonic and melodic writing for its anti-Romantic rationalism. The greatest point of contention, however, concerned the plot of act 4. The title characters live rather than die in accord with a daring reconception of Shakespeare's drama as

a play about the struggle for love, about the struggle for the right to love by young, strong, and progressive people battling against feudal traditions and feudal outlooks on marriage and family. This makes the entire play live, breathing struggle and passion as one—makes it, perhaps, the most "Komsomol-like" of all of Shakespeare's plays.²⁶

This statement comes from Radlov, who decided, in consultation with Piotrovsky and Prokofiev, to update Shakespeare's play along proletarian lines. The decision to add a happy ending was vetted by several people, including Sergey Dinamov, a critic, writer, and Central Committee advisor who sat on the repertoire board of the Bolshoy Theater and exercised political control.²⁷ In a May 2, 1935, letter to Prokofiev, Radlov reports discussing the scenario with Dinamov, who "in general approves of it, even with the happy ending, but he recommends being careful naming it—adding something like 'on motives of Shakespeare' or another cautious subtitle."²⁸

The May 16, 1935, version of the scenario (which does not bear a subtitle) details the happy ending. Juliet lies in her bedchamber, having taken the sleeping potion prepared for her by Friar Laurence. "Romeo enters," "dispatches the servant," and "pulls back the cover," but he is unable, like Paris before him, to rouse Juliet; Romeo concludes that she has died and, grief-stricken, resolves to commit suicide. The arrival of Friar Laurence prevents him from pulling out his dagger, and the two engage in a brief struggle during a break in the music (No. 51). "Juliet begins to breathe" (No. 52). Friar Laurence "strikes a gong"; Romeo clutches Juliet and bears her from the

room “into a grove” (No. 53). The people gather, and Friar Laurence directs their attention to the lovers (No. 54). “Juliet slowly comes to herself.” She and Romeo express their feelings of relief and joy in a final dance (No. 55), which Prokofiev intended to be “bright” but not overblown. It would not, he writes, “attain a *forte*.”²⁹ The final three minutes and twenty seconds of the score (No. 56) are unscripted: in the apotheosis, the music expresses what the visuals cannot.

The composer found merit in Radlov's reconception of Shakespeare's drama, but his colleagues did not. Afinogenov mocked it in his journal:

The librettist (Radlov) resurrected Romeo, did not allow him to take poison—the end is thus happy and unnatural. Shakespeare, he says, would have written this ending himself if he were alive now. . . . But if Shakespeare were alive he would have written about something else. The issue is not one of fidelity but of the spirit of the work: “For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.”³⁰

Myaskovsky, for his part, called the music of the ballet “wonderful” but “undanceable,” with a “ridiculous ending involving Juliet's revival (Radlov).”³¹ Prokofiev resisted the criticism but shared it with Radlov, suggesting that perhaps the scenario might need to be rethought. On December 6, 1935, he sent his collaborator a jocular postcard from Casablanca, where he was on tour, asking, “Do you still remember *Romeo*? Are you pressing on with it? Have you devised an ingenious ending?”³²

There followed a run-through of *Romeo and Juliet* at the offices of the newspaper *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* (Soviet Art) on January 25, 1936, with both Mutnikh and Dinamov in attendance. Prokofiev performed the first three acts to mixed results. Even in its absence, act 4 remained a subject of discussion, now both positive and negative. Some lauded the idea of basing proletarian art on the classics, others decried it. Dinamov continued to approve of the happy ending, while also stressing the collective nature of the ballet's conception: eight people, he claimed, had weighed in on the scenario. “Personally I'm for changing the finale,” he told the gathering. “Ballet is ballet. People need to leave the theater afterward feeling joy. . . . Hence I conclude that in Prokofiev's work the two main characters of Shakespeare's drama must not die.” The dramatist Osaf Litovsky and journalist David Zaslavsky concurred, noting that Prokofiev's hero and heroine were entirely different

characters than Shakespeare's. (Litovsky, significantly, was not just a dramatist: from 1930 to 1937 he served as director of the censorship board Glavrepertkom.) The music critic Aleksandr Ostretsov disagreed, declaring that "there's nothing to fear if the ballet ends with death. A somber ending does not necessarily lend a pessimist character to the whole of a ballet. The life-enhancing tone of Prokofiev's entire piece, clearly manifest in the culmination, will not be weakened if he follows in Shakespeare's footsteps in the ballet's denouement." Radlov, for his part, no longer had the wherewithal to defend his scenario, commenting that it was not worth his dying "so that Romeo and Juliet should live."³³

Irrespective of the debate over the ballet's ending, the Bolshoy Theater kept *Romeo and Juliet* in the repertoire; the premiere, however, was pushed back from the 1935–36 season to the 1936–37 season. Its eventual cancellation stemmed from an overhaul of the administration of the theater and a personal review of its repertoire by the imperious, repressive chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs, Platon Kerzhentsev. A June 3, 1936, memorandum from Kerzhentsev to Stalin and Vyacheslav Molotov, the chairman of Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars), resulted in the dismissal of the conductor Nikolay Golovanov as part of a "decisive change within the theater." This memorandum still listed *Romeo and Juliet* as a forthcoming Bolshoy Theater production. Preparations were suspended, however, pending an "assessment" of the repertoire "by the theater's new leadership."³⁴ The arrest of Mutnikh followed on April 20, 1937, as part of a wave of repression within cultural circles; he was executed on November 11.³⁵ Given its association with a vanquished "enemy of the people," *Romeo and Juliet*, a ballet involving murder, poison, and class struggle, became taboo, unfit for performance during the Twentieth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It disappeared from the repertoire. Kerzhentsev, meantime, had determined that Prokofiev required ideological guidance.

In 1941, the composer discussed the entire affair in an autobiographical essay commissioned by the editor of *Sovetskaya muzika*, the journal of the Union of Soviet Composers:

There was quite a fuss at the time about our attempts to give *Romeo and Juliet* a happy ending—in the last act Romeo arrives a minute earlier, finds Juliet alive and everything ends well. The reasons for this bit of barbarism were purely choreographic: living people can dance, the dying

cannot. The justification was that Shakespeare himself was said to have been uncertain about the ends of his plays (*King Lear*) and parallel with *Romeo and Juliet* had written *Two Gentlemen of Verona* in which all ends well. Curiously enough whereas the report that Prokofiev was writing a ballet on the theme of *Romeo and Juliet* with a happy ending was received quite calmly in London, our own Shakespeare scholars proved more papal than the pope and rushed to the defense of Shakespeare. But what really caused me to change my mind was a remark someone made to me about the ballet: "Strictly speaking your music does not express any real joy at the end." That was quite true. After several conferences with the choreographers it was found that the tragic ending could be expressed in dance and in due course the music for that ending was written.³⁶

The crucial words of this confession are "in due course." Two letters from Prokofiev to his assistant Pavel Lamm reveal that he did not begin the music for the tragic ending—Nos. 51 and 52 of the score—until the late summer of 1936, and did not finish until the late summer of 1938.³⁷ Prokofiev trimmed the ending but did not entirely rewrite it. Indeed, comparing the ballet's two endings reveals a striking overlap: the music associated with the reunion of the two lovers in the happy version (No. 55) became the music of Juliet's death in the tragic version (No. 52). The theme in question comes from an earlier passage in the ballet called "Juliet the Young Girl" (No. 10 at rehearsal number 55). Once associated with wistful reverie, it comes to stand, in both versions of the ballet, for mature passion. Prokofiev enhances the theme's emotional impact by transposing it into the highest register of the violins.

In the happy ending, Prokofiev aligns this theme with another from "Juliet the Young Girl" (rehearsal number 53). Both express longing, an emotion sated when the two lovers avoid death and reunite. The positive sentiments are enhanced in the concluding measures, which develop a theme first heard in the "Love Dance" (No. 21 at rehearsal number 143) from the balcony episode. In short, the apotheosis of this version of the ballet embellishes the music associated with the hero and heroine's first declarations of love.

The happy ending begins with an elaboration of the tranquil, thinly scored theme first heard in "Juliet at Friar Laurence's" (No. 29). The

post-awakening episodes (Nos. 53 and 54) feature a jubilant new theme: a rising arpeggiated pattern accompanied by ticking eighth notes and (in No. 53) the chiming of a bell and striking of a gong (by Friar Laurence) on the stage. Prokofiev does not use this theme anywhere else in the ballet and discarded it when he reconceived the ending. He did, however, eventually find a home for it. The nineteen-measure passage between rehearsal numbers 360 and 362 recurs almost intact at the start of the second movement of his Fifth Symphony (1944).³⁸

In Shakespeare's play, the death of Romeo and Juliet cannot be undone; Prokofiev and Radlov perhaps wanted to believe that the two lovers had merely gone to sleep, that the fantastic energies in their relationship remained unaffected by potions and daggers. This formulation elaborates a central precept of Christian Science, whose teachings Prokofiev esteemed: "No form or physical combination is adequate to represent infinite Love."³⁹ The ballet accepts the existence of earthly evil but also the preexistence of celestial harmony. Prokofiev represents the two lovers willing away their reality—the Verona square and the palace—and entering another, greater one. But at the same time, the happy ending, with its various symbolic breaches of the proscenium, affronts the religious sentiment that lies at the heart of the play. In act 4, scene 5, Friar Laurence declares: "She's not well married that lives married long, but she's best married that dies married young."⁴⁰ Prokofiev and Radlov overturn this idea. Romeo learns in the nick of time that the potion only makes Juliet appear dead. The noble bride shakes off its effects in his arms. The ballet suggests that genuine tragedy, in the Russian conception, cannot happen by accident—as in Shakespeare's text.

Both versions of the ballet foreground the strife between the Capulets and Montagues and the disparities between the inner world of the emotions and the outer world of social codes. The metric shifts in the score correspond to Shakespeare's shifts between blank verse, rhymed couplets, and sonnet forms. The elaborate interweaving of themes captures the subtleties of the couple's emotional and psychological states. The force of fate is denoted by the earsplitting dissonances of "The Duke's Command" (No. 7) and by the ponderous "Dance of the Knights" (No. 13), which derives from music conceived for a diabolical swordfight in the inchoate 1930 version of *The Fiery Angel*.⁴¹ Prokofiev would be pressured terribly into rethinking and reworking the ballet in the years ahead, and both the ordering of the numbers and their contents would be adversely affected. For example, the "Dance of the Two Captains" would be relocated from the end of the third act

(No. 49) to the beginning of the second act (No. 25) and renamed "Dance with Mandolins."⁴² The issue of the ending aside, the 1935 version of the ballet makes more dramatic sense than the 1940 revision, which sounds in places like an exploratory draft.

Muddle Instead of Music

The summer of 1935, arguably the most productive of Prokofiev's career, involved work not only on *Romeo and Juliet* but also a set of twelve children's pieces for piano,⁴³ the libretto of the Cantata, and a collection of six group ("mass") songs that Prokofiev submitted to a contest organized by the Union of Soviet Composers, the Union of Soviet Writers, and the editorial board of *Pravda*.⁴⁴ Upon completing the ballet's orchestration, he returned to Paris with the children, while Lina stayed behind to participate in a broadcast on State Radio.⁴⁵ Prokofiev performed in a Brussels concert series ("Les Maîtres Contemporains de la Musique") and a festival of his works with Concerts Pasdeloup in Paris. The reviews of these two events noted his international fame.

Before liquidating their Paris apartment, the couple took a final trip to Moscow, ringing in the start of 1936 at the Moscow Arts Theater. Four weeks later, after they had left the Soviet Union, the Soviet musical world was thrown into turmoil by the publication of an unsigned article in *Pravda*. The article, dated January 28, 1936, condemned Shostakovich's second and final completed opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* for subverting operatic convention with perverse discord and ultra-naturalistic depictions of rape and murder. Two days earlier, Stalin and his assistants had attended a performance of the work, but exited the theater before the final curtain without a word. The article, titled "Muddle Instead of Music," described the opera as "an intentionally discordant flood of sounds. Scraps of melody, embryos of musical phrases drown, tear away, and disappear anew in the din, grinding, and squealing."⁴⁶ Ten days later, another unsigned article appeared, this time damning Shostakovich's third and final ballet *The Limpid Stream* for its inauthentic musical representation of life on the collective farm.⁴⁷ The attacks, and the anti-modernist, anti-Western invective they spawned, alarmed and angered Shostakovich.⁴⁸

The articles appeared while Prokofiev was traveling in Eastern Europe. (Before settling in Moscow, he went on two massive concert tours, playing in Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, then in

France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Poland.) He read the articles while in Prague. Lina forwarded them to him from Paris, together with clippings from *Izvestiya* and the Russian émigré newspaper *Posledniye novosti*. The denunciation of Shostakovich demonstrated that the dismantling of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians and the founding of the Union of Soviet Composers had not put an end to dilettantish censorship. The extent to which the scandal prompted Lina and Prokofiev to reconsider their decision to relocate is unclear, but they seem to have concluded that Prokofiev's reputation in Soviet music circles had not suffered. In fact, his reputation seemed to improve. In the months ahead, Prokofiev allowed himself to believe that, with Shostakovich under a cloud, he had automatically become the preeminent Soviet composer. Altogether dissatisfied at earning the bulk of his income on the road, he pushed forward with the move to Moscow, reassuring Lina that if the experience soured, they could always return to Paris.

The Paris-based publisher Pierre Souvtchinsky (Pyotr Suvchinsky) was a family friend who financed and co-edited a journal devoted to the Eurasianist movement. Hostile to all things Soviet, he advised Lina to rethink the decision; he also kept her apprised of the fallout from the denunciation of Shostakovich, and drew her attention to the ongoing campaign in the Soviet media to eradicate bourgeois modernist influences from Soviet music. Souvtchinsky advised Lina to read, for example, the article "At the Gathering of Moscow Composers" from the February 17, 1936, issue of *Pravda*. According to Lina, the passage from this jingoistic piece that most bewildered Souvtchinsky was the following:

Composers, critics, and performers, the leading representatives of Soviet music, came together to repudiate hostile influences on Soviet art.

Professor H[enrich] Neuhaus, a Conservatory instructor and talented pianist, delivered a concerned, heartfelt speech. He called the *Pravda* articles a joyful event. Soviet existence is so great, so wonderful, that the music which purports to represent it should be nobler and grander than all that has come before it in art. We are scaling the Himalaya in art, Prof. Neuhaus said. How petty and insignificant are the feelings and passions represented in music like *Lady Macbeth*! This music is coarse and cynical. Its eccentricities

astonish at first exposure, but then, very quickly, they become merely tedious. The articles in *Pravda*, where the need for clarity in musical language and realism in art is forcefully argued, ought to be hailed.

It is interesting to compare the speech of a Conservatory instructor with that of one of the students, the young, talented composer [Tikhon] Khrennikov. He spoke in plain terms about the path he has taken, one that is typical of young musicians caught up in the sweep, grandeur and passion of the Great Proletarian Revolution. As artists, they sense all the beauty that is arising in our life. They want to join with the masses. But the western European composers Hindemith, Schoenberg, and Berg are given to them as examples and authorities. They are told that being a revolutionary involves finding new, intentionally complex forms and seeking out harsh sounds that are “original,” even if incomprehensible. Clarity and lucidity of form and sound have for some reason become shameful.⁴⁹

Souvtchinsky chafed at the conflation of Hindemith, a neoclassical composer with leftist tendencies, with the arch-formalists Schoenberg and Berg. The article signaled, in Souvtchinsky's opinion, that the neoclassical Prokofiev might likewise become an unwelcome presence in the Soviet sphere. He cautioned Lina not to “rush off with the furniture.” Lina summarized Souvtchinsky's thoughts on the article for her husband, then voiced her own: “The musical idiots and cretins have suddenly used the opportunity to put forth their unwanted opinions—just like the period [1929] of the disputes—and others are silent.” She told her husband to “be a little more cautious there all the same” and asked him to relay his “impressions” of Moscow back to her.⁵⁰

This letter, dated February 22, 1936, exudes a mixture of anticipation and trepidation about the move. Lina seems to be a willing partner in Prokofiev's plans, but also cognizant of the risks involved. Her postscript, written in English rather than Russian or French, gives pause: “Please acknowledge receipt of letter. Perhaps you better destroy this one.”⁵¹

Two days later, Lina wrote to Prokofiev again, this time referring more directly to the Shostakovich affair. She first reports visiting with Lyubov Kozintseva, the wife of the prolific novelist and journalist Ilya Ehrenburg,

who, like her husband, tracked political events in the RSFSR and the shake-ups within its cultural agencies. (Ehrenburg worked at the time as a French correspondent for *Izvestiya*.) Kozintseva, who received “all of the Moscow newspapers,” informed Lina that though the “attack” on Soviet composers appeared to have ended, it had shifted to architecture and would doubtless affect “all branches of art.”⁵² Lina’s specific remarks about the developments in Soviet music reported in the newspapers suggest disdain. She determines that the struggle among the bureaucrats “to be the one who is showing the new way” stems from their having “achieved” and “mastered” little in their own dismal careers. “It is one thing to criticize, another to show in deeds,” but “what have all those little insects [*bukashki*] shown? What have they achieved? What have they mastered?”⁵³ These comments are preceded by an expression of bemusement at the bungled efforts of uneducated and untalented musicians to define the parameters for Soviet music.

Lina indicates that because Prokofiev had already adopted a more accessible style, he would succeed in post-RAPM Moscow. The melodiousness of his last two ballets and his interest in the phenomenon of mass music had set the stage for his return. Although Lina recognized that diplomacy was not one of her husband’s strong suits, she supported, and perhaps even encouraged, his efforts to inform the debate about Shostakovich’s affront to proletarian taste. “I’m about to send you another *Pravda* article,” she wrote in reference to the report on the meeting of Moscow composers. “It seems to me that in all of this drama you can play a very important role, but only, of course, with great tact, and without creating any unnecessary enemies.”⁵⁴

How Pioneer Peter Caught the Wolf

Prokofiev relocated to Moscow in early March 1936. He arrived ahead of his family, and resided in the National Hotel across from Red Square while waiting for his permanent residence—the apartment allotted to him for his work on the ballet and the Cantata—to be readied. On May 15, near the end of the Paris school year, Lina arrived in Moscow with the children. Prokofiev met his family at Belorussia train station. They stayed periodically at the hotel for five weeks (until June 29) before moving into a four-room apartment in a neo-Constructivist building at 14 Zemlyanoy Val.⁵⁵ (In 1938, the street would be renamed Ulitsa Chkalova.)⁵⁶ Part of the building was assigned to artist workers, another to Sovnarkom. The family’s belongings

included eleven crates of furniture and domestic items as well as an upright piano sent to Prokofiev as a gift from a Czechoslovakian firm.

Since Prokofiev had been away on tour, it fell to Lina to attend to the logistics of the relocation. Committed to maintaining her international way of life, she planned not only for the move to the RSFSR but also for future trips to France and the United States. Worries about the darkening political and cultural climate in the Soviet sphere—and the darkening political and cultural climate throughout Europe—mixed with practical concerns: the number of dresses customs officers would allow her to bring across the border, and the layout of the future apartment. In a March 11 letter to her husband she sends greetings from “the Potyomkins,” whom she had visited the day before, and then asks: “When will the artists’ building finally be done—have you received the apartment?”⁵⁷

Lina also asks her husband about his work, referring to the contract he had received to write incidental music for a production of *Eugene Onegin*. She inquires after the dramatist Litovsky, with whom Prokofiev had discussed his plans for *Eugene Onegin*, and after Radlov. Unaware of the crisis within the Bolshoy Theater, she asks: “How is *Romeo and Juliet* coming along? I read somewhere that it will be performed ‘in the spring.’ Are they rehearsing it?”⁵⁸ It was not, of course, in rehearsal. But if Prokofiev recognized that the ballet was falling victim to the same type of anti-formalist, anti-Western backlash affecting Shostakovich, he could partly console himself with the news that the Leningrad Choreographic Technical College was interested in staging the ballet in 1938 to celebrate the bicentennial of its founding.⁵⁹ Such a production bore an artistic risk—it would be student-driven—but it would accord with the work’s focus on youth struggling against repressive forces.

As the proposal was being floated, Lina arrived in Moscow with the children. It is unknown what Prokofiev said to his wife—in person or by telephone—about the *Pravda* articles. He spoke about them with his Moscow colleagues, whom he told that he considered Shostakovich’s opera an example of first-rate stagecraft.⁶⁰ The report on the discussion at the mid-February meeting of Moscow composers mistakenly signaled to him that he was insulated from what had befallen Shostakovich. “The attacks on formalism,” he wrote in a notebook, “neither affected me nor Myaskovsky.”⁶¹ He appended that Lev Lebedinsky, chief ideologue of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, apologized for treating him discourteously in 1929.

Prokofiev's arrival in Moscow was cause for jubilation. "Of course we were all in seventh heaven about this," Atovmyan recalled, adding that he and his colleagues "tried in every possible way to look after [Prokofiev's] charming wife, Lina Ivanovna. We arranged concerts for her with performances of *The Ugly Duckling* and did everything to prevent her from convincing Prokofiev to return to Paris, which had, it showed, very much spoiled her."⁶²

Excluding complaints about problems finding time to pursue her singing career, Lina's initial reactions to Moscow are unclear; Prokofiev, for his part, tended to view life in the city sardonically. Strolling by an election notice, he said to his wife: "Just look, Ptashka, at how everything interests them: they all vote for the same person."⁶³ To those left behind in Paris, Prokofiev described the relocation in matter-of-fact terms. He assured his mother-in-law, for example, that the family had adjusted to the move from Paris to Moscow without particular difficulty and had enjoyed another tranquil summer in Polenovo:

We went to Polenovo in July and August, and returned on September 1 to Moscow, since Svyatoslav had to start school. In Polenovo he took Russian lessons each day and has quite passably adjusted to it. But he didn't stay in Russian school for long; now we've taken him to an English one. The enrollment is less English and American children than the children of Soviets serving abroad. Our little one flouted himself during the summer. Obsessed with chess, he walked around with a little board and figures in his pocket, and if he saw someone who knew how to play, he brought out the chess and requested a game. The apartment we received isn't very big—smaller than the previous one in Paris—but in other respects it's completely presentable. They've even shown our building to English tourists, and we've taken them into our apartment. But it was a wonder to put in order, and the process continues: it's difficult to find fittings, fuses, and so forth. The cupboards are insufficient to accommodate the books, linens, dishes, and other detritus. In light of this we've temporarily left Oleg in Polenovo, where he's in safe hands and enjoying a magical childhood summer (in contrast to the dust from the construction in our neighborhood; our road is being doubled in width). I'm working hard:

I wrote music for the film of *The Queen of Spades* and for the drama *Eugene Onegin*, which Tairov is staging. Besides this I wrote a big overture for a new symphony orchestra (of 130 members) that is being formed here. We've heard no news of you, which is entirely disagreeable. Ptashka and Svyatoslav will write to you in a few days. Ptashka is very tired from frayed nerves; the summer did not put this right....I'm planning to be in Paris in December.⁶⁴

In the summer of 1936, as in the summer of 1935, Prokofiev composed at a Mozartian clip, producing two of the three commissions he received for the Pushkin centennial of 1937. Polenovo—and the move to the RSFSR in general—inspired the best-known music of his career, as well as a cluster of lesser-known works he would mine for material in the future.

The most popular score is, of course, *Peter and the Wolf*, which arose out of discussions between Prokofiev and Nataliya Sats, the indefatigable, well-respected director of the Moscow Children's Theater. The result was a pedagogical work that introduced the instruments of the orchestra within the context of a spoken-word narrative about a Soviet boy scout, the headstrong, goodhearted Pioneer Peter, who sets wrong to right by defying an elder. As the Slavacist Catriona Kelly remarks, "Conflicts of this kind were *passim*... in children's literature (and in journalism for children) throughout the 1920s and early 1930s."⁶⁵ Sats enlisted the poet Nina Sakonskaya (Antonina Sokolovskaya), a prolific author of tales-in-verse for young readers, to write the text. Prokofiev, however, rejected Sakonskaya's draft, complaining that it was too poetic, too rhymed. "The relations between words and music in a work like this are very delicately balanced," he hectored Sats. "Words must know their place; otherwise they may lead the listener's attention astray, instead of helping his perception of the music."⁶⁶ In keeping with the Pioneer spirit of self-reliance, Prokofiev chose to write the text on his own in consultation with Sats. After completing a draft, which he titled *How Pioneer Peter Caught the Wolf*, he wrote a detailed set of performance instructions in Russian and English. The English-language instructions read as follows:

Each character of this tale is represented by a corresponding instrument in the orchestra: the bird by a flute, the duck

by an oboe, the cat by a clarinet playing staccato in a low register, the grandfather by a bassoon, the wolf by three horns, Peter by the string quartet, the shooting of the hunters by the kettle drums and bass drum. Before an orchestral performance it is desirable to show these instruments to the children and to play on them the corresponding leitmotifs. Thereby, the children learn to distinguish the sonorities of the instruments during the performance of this tale.⁶⁷

The plot recalls, among other works, the folktale *Ivan Tsarevich and the Gray Wolf* and the Disney animated shorts *The Three Bears* and *The Wise Little Hen*.⁶⁸ It also derives from parables about nature spirits, however, of which the most frightening is the wood-goblin, which can appear as large as a tree, steal newborns, abduct villagers, drive them insane, and send them back to their homes mute and covered with moss. The wood-goblin's favorite beast is the wolf, which, according to folklore, must be domesticated.⁶⁹ Peter plays the role of the tamer in Prokofiev's tale. His controlling, rationalizing impulse mimics, on a sociopolitical front, the Soviet obsession with mastering nature, one clear-cut example being the triumph of the Moscow Metro over Mother Earth.

On the surface, *Peter and the Wolf* centers on two events: Peter's rescue of a songbird from the claws of a tomcat, and Peter's capture, with the assistance of the indebted songbird, of a displaced, famished wolf. Before the trap is set, the wolf swallows an inattentive duck. Peter summons a group of hunters to his aid, convincing them to place the wolf on exhibit in the zoo, and is finally dragged home by his unamused grandfather. The tale ends, for the purposes of narrative symmetry, with the sound of the duck quacking from within the wolf's stomach.

Prokofiev drafted the piano score for *Peter and the Wolf* in less than a week, after which he played and talked it through for a group of schoolchildren. (The piano score was completed on April 15, the orchestration on April 24.) He devised Peter's theme in advance of the others, working out several different versions in a sketchbook that also includes themes destined for *Romeo and Juliet*, the Sixth and Seventh piano sonatas, and the Seventh Symphony.⁷⁰ To affirm Peter's richness of character, his "polyphonic" persona, Prokofiev scored the theme for string quartet. He also transformed the theme, filtering it through different tonalities and presenting it as a miniature

pastorale (when Peter steps through the gate into the meadow behind his grandfather's house), a waltz (when Peter convinces the hunters not to kill the wolf), and a mock heroic march (when Peter leads the parade to the zoo). The narrator addresses the lad's self-reliance, his love of animals and nature, and his vigilance—the Pioneer codes of conduct. Peter's theme cedes at the start of the score to the songbird's theme, which alludes to the bluebird variation in Chaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*. The two themes thereafter combine, assisting each other, as it were, to fashion a small ternary form.

The remarkable pictorialism of this and the other orchestral interludes in *Peter and the Wolf* ensured that it would be a success with children. Following a lackluster premiere with the Moscow Philharmonic on May 2, the work was re-premiered at the newly created Central Children's Theater, where it delighted the audience.⁷¹ In search of a similar success with adults, Prokofiev wrote a pictorial work of a very different sort: the little-known, underrated *Russian Overture*.⁷² This thirteen-minute piece exists in two versions, the first (1936) with a heavier woodwind and brass complement than the second (1937). Prokofiev reduced the scoring on the advice of the Hungarian conductor Eugen Szenkár, who had encouraged the creation of the work and become its champion. Pleased by the success of the October 29, 1936, premiere, Szenkár took the Overture on tour, conducting the first version in Leningrad and the second version in Paris and Tel Aviv.

Somewhat like Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, Prokofiev's Overture includes motives derived from Russian folkdance, salon song, and liturgical chant, all packaged into a sonata-rondo form. The composer highlights the folkdance motive in the first, third, and fifth sections, the salon song motive in the second section, and the liturgical chant motive in the fourth section. Toward the raucous climax, the motives are broken down and reduced to single-measure ostinato patterns that form the backbone for a grotesque portrayal, in the brasses and woodwinds, of wheezing accordions and shouting carnival barkers. The Overture, which invoked the nonrealist aesthetics of Stravinsky and the Ballets Russes, did not please the conservative Myaskovsky, who branded it "scathing and affected" after hearing the dress rehearsal.⁷³ Prokofiev did not attend the premiere; his absence, Myaskovsky reports, "suddenly caused anxiety."⁷⁴ The Overture earned positive initial reviews, however, with the infernal elements of the conclusion attracting less attention than what a critic for Leningrad *Krasnaya gazeta* dubbed the "freshness" of the "song-like melodic material" and "orchestral color."⁷⁵

Karamzin

In their time, *Peter and the Wolf* and the *Russian Overture* fared well. However, the magnum opus of the mid-1930s, the ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, did not, even though it was conceived with the aim of raising the profile of Soviet ballet at home and abroad. First the prospective Leningrad State Academic Theater production fell through, then the contracted Moscow Bolshoy Theater production, and finally the prospective student-driven production for the Leningrad Choreographic Technical College. It would take two long years for *Romeo and Juliet* to reach the stage; the premiere, moreover, would occur not in Moscow but in Brno, Czechoslovakia, and would be partial, involving only the highlights of the score.⁷⁶ Prokofiev's frustration prompted him to initiate a salvage operation: he extracted the first of eventually three orchestral suites from *Romeo and Juliet*.⁷⁷ Detached from the ballet's controversial scenario, the suites would demonstrate to Kerzhentsev that Prokofiev, "a former captive of formalism," was clearly trying "to overcome formalism and approach realism."⁷⁸ Kerzhentsev's tepid praise came late—the quotation is taken from a December 19, 1937, report to Stalin and Molotov about Soviet musical affairs—and did nothing to hasten the ballet's Soviet premiere.

The difficulties with the ballet spurred Prokofiev in the spring of 1936 to express his concerns about the state of Soviet music. Even in the wake of recent setbacks and in the midst of the darkening cultural climate, he expected his opinions to be heeded. The tone of his pronouncements ranges from cautious to strident. Below is an example of his cautious approach (a document quoted in chapter 2 finds him reacting more heatedly). In answer to an April 23 questionnaire from the editors of the wall-newspaper of the Union of Soviet Composers, Prokofiev offered his opinion on the dissolution of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians:

- 1) It is difficult for me to speak about the overall significance of the April 23, 1932 Resolution, since it took place during my extended time abroad. I am thus obliged to restrict myself to a subjective point of view: I sensed opposition to my compositions before this time, which to a large extent diminished afterwards.
- 2) In much present-day music making, there is a depressing separation between the old-fashioned musical language of our composers

and present-day reality. They speak in Karamzin's language about present-day issues. Our composers have not yet found a language that is both comprehensible and new.

- 3) For the twentieth anniversary of October I am writing a large cantata, but in addition I hope to complete some other projects.
- 4) The Union of Soviet Composers has not helped me in my creative work. On the domestic front it has performed many valuable services. 3–4 years ago, moreover, it facilitated the performance of my works in Moscow and Leningrad.⁷⁹

The answer to question 2 is most significant, for here Prokofiev articulates his long-standing view that the composer must at once divert and edify the listener. By referring to Nikolay Karamzin, Prokofiev forges a parallel between Soviet music and old-fashioned, sentimentalist aesthetics. To shed its Karamzinian bonds while also avoiding modernist abstraction, Soviet music needed to privilege what Prokofiev, in his 1934 article "The Paths of Soviet Music," called a "light-serious" or "serious-light" style.

The Cultural Diplomat

During his penultimate tour in the West—a three-month excursion that took him to Belgium, France, and the United States—Prokofiev boasted about the benefits of being a Soviet composer. He also justified his efforts, which had hitherto partly been a flop, to create appealing and ennobling works for the masses. "The composer working in Moscow needs to do this," he informed a Brussels radio reporter. "Today we have large new masses of listeners. It is the composer's duty to hold their attention in the concert hall, to offer them serious yet simple music, so as not to fatigue but to engage this segment of the public."⁸⁰

Prokofiev spoke to the station on December 2, 1936, as part of an elaborate broadcast featuring the Second Violin Concerto, the Overture in B-flat Major, the Symbolist-inspired score *Seven They Are Seven*, and the suite from the ballet *The Tale of the Buffoon*. The first and second works evince his self-described transparency of expression; the third and fourth, dating from his unbridled, iconoclastic youth, do not. Long before his move to the RSFSR, Prokofiev reduced and refined his musical language, but he justified the change as an on-the-spot reaction to the conditions in his homeland. Touring abroad, he masqueraded as a born-again composer, a proud new

Soviet citizen who had rejected discord for concord, chromatic harmonies for flowing diatonic melodies.

Following a December 14 broadcast in Paris, during which he spoke with pride about *Peter and the Wolf*, he conducted and performed in Lausanne and Prague. He returned to Paris for another event on December 19, thereafter grumbling to Myaskovsky that "some Parisians like the suite from *Romeo*; others heaved sighs of regret over the simplification of my style."⁸¹ Lina joined him in Paris on December 24, distressed about being harassed by French customs officials. The couple spent the holidays together in a flat on the rue du Dr Roux. On January 6, Prokofiev left for the United States, leaving Lina behind to care for her mother.

The American tour swung through the Northeast (Boston, New York, and Washington) and Midwest (Chicago and St. Louis). In interviews en route, Prokofiev advertised his latest works while making the argument that concert-goers must be introduced to accessible music before confronting challenging repertoire, lest they flee to dance halls for pure entertainment. He elaborated for a reporter from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, describing *Romeo and Juliet* as the test of a "new melodic line." The First Suite from the ballet, Prokofiev asserted, offers "almost immediate appeal" like "nothing" in his oeuvre "that has gone before."⁸² The sales pitch worked. The critic Edward Barry praised him for having the courage to change his method: "Far from adopting one theory of music to the exclusion of all others and devoting his whole life in an attempt to stuff it down the world's throat, [Prokofiev] changes his mind frequently and keeps himself ever open to new ideas."⁸³

The American tour was a success: audiences and critics responded to his appearances with enthusiasm. The lone voice of dissent was the music critic for the *Christian Science Monitor*, who wondered why his two concerts in Boston did not include his latest works, in particular the incidental music for *Eugene Onegin*. "Surely the work must be done," the critic groused. "Might we not have heard something of all this?"⁸⁴ It was a reasonable question—but one that Prokofiev could not honestly answer, since he had been instructed in a December 3 memorandum to discontinue work on *Eugene Onegin*. The Committee on Arts Affairs had prohibited the staging of the drama on political grounds. The director, Tairov, had fallen out of favor with the Committee over another project; access to Molotov allowed him to retain his position and his theater, but not before he vowed to mend his ways.

Prokofiev did not speak about the cancellation while abroad, stressing instead—and without the slightest trace of irony—the benefits of Soviet government involvement in the arts. He was obliged to fulfill his patriotic duties. Doing so ensured he could travel and that he could retain the persona of a free artist. There were other paradoxes, other signs of internal conflict. He apparently took pride in being awash in work even as he learned that the work, when finished, would not always be performed. He also, it seems, reassured himself that he was immune to censure because of—rather than in spite of—the fact that Meyerhold and Tairov had come under fire. In this regard he was altogether mistaken.

Such was the opinion of one of his closest friends in the United States, Vernon Duke (Vladimir Dukelsky), who caught up with Prokofiev in New York and quizzed him about the tumult in Moscow. Duke maintained a successful career as a Broadway composer, penning a number of jazz standards while also competing in the arena of traditional symphonic and choral music. Like Prokofiev, he had abandoned Russia during the Revolution, thereafter leading a courageous and adventurous career that included a stint as a café musician in Constantinople (Istanbul), a commission in Paris from the Ballets Russes, freelance work as a songwriter in London, and tutelage from George Gershwin in New York. Resolving to write intelligent music for the general public, he settled into show business. From their letters and memoirs, it emerges that Duke and Prokofiev quarreled affectionately about their opposite career choices while also helping each other to secure performances.

When they reunited in 1937, Prokofiev spoke in upbeat terms about life in the Soviet Union, while Duke, accustomed to a competitive capitalist environment, recognized that the description was too good to be true:

I took Serge to see Mother, who worshipped him. “Sergey Sergeyevich, do you mean to tell me that the Communists let you out—just like that?” she asked incredulously. “Just like that, Anna Aleksevna,” Prokofiev assured her, slapping his thighs—a favorite mannerism with him. “Here I am all in one piece, as you see.” “And Lina Ivanovna?” Mother persisted. “She will come back to the States with me in October—I have enough engagements to warrant a speedy return.” “What about your boys?” At this, Prokofiev changed the subject abruptly. I later learned that the Soviet authorities would not let them travel with their parents;

in other words, they were forcibly left behind in Russia, as hostages.

At dinner—Mother having discreetly refused to join us as we had “so much” to talk about—I asked Serge a difficult question, then uppermost in my mind. I wanted to know how he could live and work in the atmosphere of Soviet totalitarianism. Serge was silent for a moment, then said quietly and seriously: “Here is how I feel about it: I care nothing for politics—I’m a composer first and last. Any government that lets me write my music in peace, publishes everything I compose before the ink is dry, and performs every note that comes from my pen is all right with me. In Europe we all have to fish for performances, cajole conductors and theater directors; in Russia they come to me—I can hardly keep up with the demand. What’s more, I have a comfortable flat in Moscow, a delightful dacha in the country and a brand-new car. My boys go to a fine English school in Moscow. It’s true, Lina Ivanovna whimpers now and then—but you know her. Being a composer’s wife isn’t easy.”⁸⁵

Anecdotes, especially amusing anecdotes, tend to be inaccurate, and this one is no exception: Prokofiev had only just purchased his car, an ostentatious blue Ford, and did not yet own a dacha.⁸⁶ Duke’s story nonetheless draws attention to the strain in Prokofiev and Lina’s relationship that had developed after their move from Paris to Moscow—here characterized as a sensible career option.

The last concert on Prokofiev’s schedule occurred on February 8 at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, where the ambassador, Aleksandr Troyanovsky, honored him with a resplendent reception. His recital—which included *Visions fugitives*, the Andante movement from the Fourth Piano Sonata, and a selection from *Romeo and Juliet*—was heard by members of Congress, heads of diplomatic missions, and other local luminaries. According to a story in the *Washington Post*, the composer seemed “glad to be the guest artist for so responsive an audience” and played “with effortless composure and a crisp, brilliant style.”⁸⁷

On this glamorous occasion, Prokofiev greatly enjoyed being the toast of Soviet music. The rest of the 1937 tour suggests that he also relished his

cosmopolitanism, paying greater heed to European and American accounts of his activities than to Soviet ones. To retain his status as a cultural attaché—to flourish, as it were, as a Soviet composer outside the Soviet Union—he needed to improve his standing with cultural and political officials. After his return to Moscow in late February, he started work on a cluster of party-line scores. In the opinion of his supporters, these works pointed the way forward for Soviet music; to his detractors, however, they proved that Prokofiev remained unwilling to abandon his formalist tendencies and adapt to new conditions.

Miscalculation

The effort to improve his standing began with the massive *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, which involved double mixed chorus, orchestra, accordion band, military band, and *musique concrète* (a siren, an alarm bell, recorded speech, and marching feet). Prokofiev conceived the work as a tribute to Lenin, but it evolved into a ten-movement narrative about the Revolution, the civil war, Stalin's pledge to Lenin, and the writing of the Soviet Constitution. It was a transparent high-stakes attempt by the composer to appease; it was also a profound miscalculation.⁸⁸

The Cantata casts a long shadow over Prokofiev's career, extending from four years before his move to the RSFSR to thirty years after. The story of its creation starts in the summer of 1932, when Prokofiev rented a picture-perfect villa for himself and his family in Sainte Maxime in the South of France. The property belonged to Jacques Sadoul, an influential French Communist who worked as a foreign correspondent for *Izvestiya*.⁸⁹ Prokofiev had met Sadoul three years before in Paris; the correspondent was presumably one of those who urged Prokofiev to become a Moscow resident.

Sadoul's library included a French-language edition of Lenin's writings. Encouraged by Souvtschinsky, who was also vacationing at the villa, Prokofiev began to conceive a large-scale vocal and orchestral piece based on Lenin's speeches of 1917 (before his arrival at Finland Station in Petrograd) and 1920. In a September 10, 1932, letter to Afinogenov in Moscow, Prokofiev described the experience of reading Lenin in French. The translation, he deduced, softened Lenin's coarse locution. "You might say that this is aestheticism," Prokofiev told Afinogenov, "but I once read Chekhov and Dostoevsky in German and, I can assure you, it turned out quite well." Prokofiev added that some of Lenin's expressions were incomprehensible,

both in Russian and in French. “My French is quite fine,” the composer boasted, but in one of Lenin’s writings

I came across a word I did not understand: “*boisseau*.” A letter from Engels to Bebel had been lying under this *boisseau* for fifteen years, and Lenin was up in arms about it. Then suddenly it dawned on me that this letter had evidently been “*pod spudom*”! Then I realized that I didn’t even know what *spud* means in Russian. Do you?⁹⁰

The word *boisseau* means “bushel.” Prokofiev refers to a letter from the German political economist Friedrich Engels to the German political activist August Bebel that had been withheld from publication. The letter, Lenin grouched, had been lying under a bushel (“hidden in a haystack”) for fifteen years. This was how Lenin’s jargon came out in French. Prokofiev determines that, in the original Russian, Lenin declared that the letter had been *pod spudom*, meaning it had been “kept under wraps”—in other words, suppressed. The composer had evidently been reading chapter 4 of Lenin’s 1917 manifesto *The State and Revolution*, which concerns Engels and Bebel.

Prokofiev asked Atovmyan to send him the six-volume collection of Lenin’s writings (in Russian) that had been published in 1930 (volumes 1–3) and 1931 (volumes 4–6). Atovmyan did not find the requested books, since they were no longer available, having disappeared from bookshelves in anticipation of the release of a larger Lenin edition from the Central Committee Institute of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. “So I might have to wait the whole summer [to receive the books],” Prokofiev lamented, noting the irony of being unable to find Lenin in—of all places—Moscow. The peculiar absence, he mused, would likely inspire a “new Soviet anecdote (of the indecent kind).”⁹¹ He ended up working with the new 1933 edition; most of the texts in the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October* are found in its pages.

During his brief visits to the RSFSR in 1933 and 1934 Prokofiev broached the subject of the Cantata to his backer Boris Gusman, then the director of the Radio Committee arts division. Gusman found potential in the project and arranged a generous honorarium of 25,000 rubles. According to the June 26, 1935, contract, the “Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of the Soviet State,” as it was initially called, needed to be suitable for radio broadcast, politically correct (in the Marxist-Leninist sense), and attentive to official artistic policy. The agreement came with a concrete deadline:

the full score had to be submitted to the Radio Committee no later than October 15, 1936.⁹²

In its general aesthetic, the Cantata recalls Sergey Eisenstein's *Battle-ship Potyomkin* (1925) and Shostakovich's Symphony no. 2 (1927), two products of a liberal decade. Taking his cue from Souvtschinsky, who wanted the Cantata to be historically accurate, Prokofiev depicts the Revolution as two separate events: the first in February 1917, the second in October 1917. The first Revolution swept away the autocracy of Tsar Nikolay II in favor of a provisional government; the second Revolution replaced the provisional government with the Soviets, controlled by Lenin's Bolshevik Party. Prokofiev dramatizes the moment of victory with orchestral fireworks but frames the festivities with quotes from military and political speeches. Lenin's and Stalin's dicta spread the flames of October.

The libretto of the Cantata begins with the opening sentence of Marx and Engels's 1848 *Communist Manifesto*: "A specter is stalking Europe, the specter of Communism." Prokofiev does not actually set these iconic words but represents them with "stalking" music: fortissimo timpani rolls, chromatic pentuplets in the brass, and arpeggiated diminished-seventh chords in the strings. There follows a quotation from Marx's 1845 "Theses on Feuerbach," first published in Engels's *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy* (1886). The text in question, "The philosophers have only explained the world, in various ways; the point is to change it," comes from the eleventh thesis. Prokofiev initially planned to begin and end the Cantata with these words, but then the muse arrived, and he decided to devote the entire second movement to them.

Following an instrumental interlude, problems arise: Prokofiev abbreviates Lenin, setting three lines from the last paragraph of part 1, section 1 of the 1902 essay "What Is to Be Done?" These are taken out of context, a distortion of what the guardians of Lenin's legacy considered to be holy writ. After another instrumental interlude, Prokofiev depicts the Revolution through a musical pastiche, with special effects including the real-or-imitated sound of the leader's voice and tread of soldiers' boots. The text gathers quotations from Lenin's portentous October 1917 pronouncements. Stitching the texts together made musical but not political sense. From the perspective of the censors, Prokofiev had irresponsibly damaged Lenin's image.

And Stalin's. Movement 8 of the Cantata sets part of Stalin's January 26, 1924, speech at the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets, in which the ruler pledges to uphold the departed Lenin's teachings. (The first order of

business was eulogistic: the Congress adopted a proposal to rename Petrograd Leningrad and authorized the construction of a mausoleum on Red Square.) Movement 10 of the Cantata jumps forward to December 6, 1936. Prokofiev sets a passage from Stalin's address to the Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets introducing the Constitution of the Soviet Union, which assigned control of the Russian Federation and the Union Republics to the Council of People's Commissars.

The original scenario for the Cantata did not call for this bureaucratic conclusion; it was the final salvo in a creative process that found the composer seeking to eclipse the efforts of his lesser-skilled contemporaries likewise busy writing pieces for the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution. Prokofiev's efforts reflected the generous terms of his contract; they also stemmed from his intention to transform the least poetic of verbal forms (the political speech) into the most poetic of verbal forms (the choral ode). Lenin and Stalin served as the basis for the propagandistic reconstitution of the dithyramb. It was an enormous challenge, but the Radio Committee had placed its trust in him. Such trust was in fact conditional, as evidenced by the various escape clauses in the contract.

Prokofiev completed the outline of the Cantata in Paris in the early summer of 1935. For help, he turned to Souvtchinsky and Sadoul. In an unpublished letter to the Soviet musicologist (and Prokofiev acquaintance) Izraïl Nestyev, Souvtchinsky acknowledged that he had provided Prokofiev with a working title for the Cantata, *We're On the Move*, and furnished a plan for the first three movements. He advised Prokofiev to write part 1 of the Cantata for "*tutti* chorus" using words by Marx. For part 2, he advised him to represent "the dispute between Lenin and the defeatists." For part 3, finally, he suggested that Prokofiev compose a march "in which the formulaic phrase 'We're on the move' is repeated" end to end.⁹³ In another unpublished letter to the musicologist Malcolm Brown, Souvtchinsky supplied additional details about the project:

In effect, it was I who suggested to Serge Prokofieff, at his request, those texts that form the basis for the first version of the Cantata (introduction: "A specter is haunting Europe..."; "Philosophers explained..."; "We march..."). I also gave him the idea of dividing the choirs into two parts to explain the polemic between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks.

The Cantata, Souvtchinsky points out, thereafter became a collective enterprise. "The project was reviewed by Jacques Sadoul and by those people—I am unaware of their names—with whom S. P. spoke in Moscow." He appends that "in my project there was no question of Stalin."⁹⁴

The original and revised versions of the Cantata libretto are undated, but appear to have been written between 1935 and 1936. (Part of the text is on letterhead from the European Hotel in Warsaw.)⁹⁵ Departing from Souvtchinsky, Prokofiev expanded the score from three to six movements: "1. Epigraph from K. Marx; 2. Formation of the Bolshevik Party (Lenin); 3. October Revolution (on excerpts from Lenin's speeches and letters from this time); 4. Victory (Lenin); 5. Stalin's pledge; 6. Repetition of the epigraph with a supplement that summarized the Party's work."⁹⁶ In the margins and on the back side of this handwritten list of movements, Prokofiev added some explanatory notes, pointing out that the "fragmentariness of the phrases" he had selected from Lenin's talks "does not distort their meaning," since they came "from the same period" and reflected "the same aspiration." By assigning Lenin's words to "different sections of the chorus," they will "give an impression of swift movement," offering "glimpses of the Revolution from different angles." In the "Victory" movement "the noise of the cannonade" and the sound of the orchestra "culminates." The celebration, Prokofiev comments, "is subdued." "The music calms," and then Stalin's pledge is heard, solemnly at first, and then "all the more clearly and broadly, reaching an apogee at the end."⁹⁷ The Cantata would conclude with a repetition of Marx's complaint about chattering philosophers.

The revised libretto provides additional details about Prokofiev's verbal and musical intentions. His remarks, which appear in between stanzas of the libretto, seek to assuage the concerns that the Committee on Arts Affairs might have about the level of dissonance in the score. Prokofiev assures the censors that his music would honor Marx's (and Lenin's) call for world transformation. "Against a solemnly majestic backdrop," he explains,

the choir articulates the epigraph: "Philosophers have only explained the world, in various ways; the point is to change it." The orchestra holds back; one senses a hidden force that has yet to break through the surface: "We are marching in close rank..." One feels the stride of a march, but it is not a march. The music's mood now abruptly changes: the orchestra expresses unease—the October Revolution is

imminent. Against this background separate choral groups less sing than declaim: “The crisis has matured. The entire future of the Russian Revolution is at stake...” Now the music becomes stormy: the civil war begins. One hears conflict in the orchestra; an alarm bell bursts in—this is the enemies’ commotion. The accordions ring out—separate victories are celebrated. Against this background separate choral groups rush in: “We should, without losing a minute, organize the rebel ranks...” The victory is subdued. Calm follows the orchestral climax, in which one hears the following: “Comrades, we are approaching spring...” Here the music takes on a marchlike gait, against which: “You will grow large. They will give you arms. Take them and learn the art of war well, not in order to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, but in order to achieve the end of exploitation, poverty, and wars.”⁹⁸ For purely musical reasons, this text is a somewhat abbreviated version of the original. I don’t think that the cuts change the basic meaning, however. The march recedes, leading to the solemn, reverent music of the introduction. Chorus: “Philosophers have only explained the world, in various ways; the point is to change it, and WE WILL CHANGE IT.” End.⁹⁹

No mention is made here of the three instrumental movements in the Cantata. Much more noteworthy, Prokofiev excludes the two Stalin-based movements from his description, even though the first (“Pledge,” movement 8) was central to his initial conception, while the second (“Constitution,” movement 10) brought the Cantata up to date politically.

From the transcript of a May 8, 1937, meeting of composers and musical officials, it emerges that Prokofiev had long discussed his plans for the Cantata with the Committee, but that he spoke little about its actual contents, noting only that he would be working with “large forms” whose impact on the listener would be cumulative rather than immediate.¹⁰⁰ Other composers strove for comparable grandiosity, but the titles of their works, works that have all been forgotten, indicate that their intentions were much different. The list of finished and evaluated works included Yevgeniy Golubev’s *Return of the Sun*, a celebration of the “peoples of the North” (Eskimos) that included an address to the “Leader of the Peoples—Stalin.” Aleksandr

Gedike wrote the “celebratory” cantata *Motherland of Joy*, while Mikhaïl Yudin wrote the like-minded *Spring*, “a cantata on the theme of the joy of Soviet life.” The list of unfinished and unevaluated works included Nikolay Vilinsky’s cantata “dedicated to the construction of Soviet Moldavia” and Vladimir Enke’s cantata *Motherland*.¹⁰¹ Neither of these compositions uses the actual words of Lenin and Stalin; the librettos are folkloric fabrications.

This was the correct approach to celebrating the Revolution, the approach backed by the Committee on Arts Affairs. Prokofiev was not the only composer to buck the trend—another 1937 work by Yudin, the *Heroic Oratorio*, would be discredited for its mishandling of select lines by Lenin and Stalin¹⁰²—but he was certainly the most prominent. His pride in his effort is evident in two articles that he wrote for the newspaper *Vechernyaya Moskva*. In the first, dated January 28, 1936, Prokofiev comments that, in his Cantata, “Lenin’s words will serve for the first time as the basis for a large-scale musical composition.”¹⁰³ (The date of this piece coincides precisely with that of the infamous *Pravda* editorial “Muddle Instead of Music,” which, as discussed, condemned Shostakovich for his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.) In a June 22, 1936, article, Prokofiev went a step further by saluting Lenin’s powers of oration: “Lenin wrote with such pictorial, clear-cut, and persuasive language that it seemed a shame to resort to a poetic summary of his ideas. I wanted to go right to the original source and use the leader’s actual words.”¹⁰⁴

Leonid Maksimenkov, the author of a landmark study of Soviet culture of the 1930s, confirms that the libretto angered Kerzhentsev, the chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs.¹⁰⁵ Upset that Prokofiev had taken liberties with Lenin’s words in setting them to music, Kerzhentsev insisted that the composer rewrite the libretto using verse rather than prose. In a letter to his superior Molotov, Kerzhentsev reported that though he “by all means supported Prokofiev’s wish to compose his cantata,” he felt the need to “point out the unacceptability of basing the entire cantata on randomly collected and unrelated quotations from Lenin.” This creative approach, he emphasized, was “neither politically nor artistically justifiable.”¹⁰⁶ The letter dates from May 4, 1936, the climax of the anti-formalist, anti-modernist campaign in the arts.

It is a telling irony that Kerzhentsev was busy at the time writing a monograph about Lenin, one that interwove biographical details with select de-contextualized quotations from the leader.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps aware of the monograph, Prokofiev dismissed the suggestion that he omit Lenin’s words from the libretto. Unconcerned about retribution, he also lodged a complaint about Kerzhentsev with Marshall Mikhaïl Tukhachevsky, a nonvoting member of

the Central Committee. Tukhachevsky was engaged at the time in a losing battle for his own survival (Stalin ordered him arrested in 1937) and did not intervene on Prokofiev's behalf. He instead slid the matter over to Molotov, who responded to the complaint by instructing Kerzhentsev to "rescind" his objection to "Prokofiev's project and allow him to address the question of the Lenin cantata himself."¹⁰⁸

Prokofiev's bureaucratic triumph over Kerzhentsev was Pyrrhic: the chairman would have his revenge, ensuring, in the months ahead, the removal of *Romeo and Juliet* from the Bolshoy Theater repertoire and further problems with the Cantata. At the time, however, Molotov's backing emboldened the composer to expand the Cantata from a six- into a ten-movement structure. The score evolved from a Leninist montage into a depiction of what Marina Nestyeva (the daughter of Izraïl Nestyev) calls the "gigantic 'locomotive of history,'" traveling with "irresistible force, sweeping aside everything in its path."¹⁰⁹ The locomotive had to come to a halt, however, lest the Cantata lose cohesion. To this end, Prokofiev turned to his Leningrad friend Boris Demchinsky for help with the libretto. Prokofiev trusted Demchinsky's opinion on literary matters (he had consulted with him while writing the libretto of his opera *The Fiery Angel*), but in this instance Demchinsky appeared hesitant to help.

He did, however, provide Prokofiev with an honest critique of the Cantata's failings.¹¹⁰ Demchinsky begins his May 7, 1937, letter by apologizing for the delay in responding to Prokofiev, and then he reports that he had visited the public library in Leningrad to peruse Lenin's writings, but the library refused to allow him to take home the index he needed, and he was loathe to spend eight rubles on his own copy. Turning to specifics, Demchinsky voices concern about the emphasis in the Cantata on historical chronicle. The events of 1917, he felt, needed to be represented in a valedictory fashion. "A Cantata for the Twentieth should be closer to conclusions than first steps," he informs Prokofiev. And rather than trafficking in names and dates, the libretto needed to celebrate the "brotherhood and independence of the peoples: the joy of being ('living has become better, living has become happier'),"¹¹¹ work as an easy duty, as an honor; the Constitution, as the culmination of a long road." Fearing that Prokofiev might toss his letter into the trash in a huff, Demchinsky offers the Cantata some praise, lauding both the "harmonic chaos" of the Revolution movement and the decision to include Stalin's funeral pledge to Lenin. But there was still too much detail: why, Demchinsky asks, does the listener need to hear about officer cadets? Why are there six pledges rather than just one?

The Cantata has a historical foundation, he notes, “but where are the columns, where is the cupola?”

There were also problems with the ending. It was insufficient to quote from Marx: the Cantata needed to feature a “third party,” someone whose words could somehow “synthesize” the 1917 experience. Demchinsky’s choice was both timely and unassailable: Pushkin, who had, in the run-up to the 1937 jubilee of his death, become a “political figure.” To enhance the Cantata’s apotheosis, Demchinsky advised Prokofiev to set Pushkin’s poem “To Chaadayev” (K Chaadayevu). The 1818 poem, which is dedicated to the dissident Russian dandy and Francophile philosopher Pyotr Chaadayev, protests political and religious oppression. Demchinsky specifically wanted Prokofiev to set the words “Believe, comrade, and it will come to pass” (Tovarishch, ver’: vzoydyot ona), which predicts Russia’s rebirth after an epoch of tyranny. By quoting Pushkin in the libretto and the “Internationale” in the score, Prokofiev would, in Demchinsky’s opinion, give the Cantata the symbolism it so desperately needed.

Demchinsky ended his critique of the text by vaguely promising to help Prokofiev with the revisions, but he did not follow through. Frustrated, the composer upbraided him, pointing out that “one’s word is bond,” and bemoaning the difficulties that he had revising the text on his own. “It fell upon me to clean up the mess,” he grumbled in a May 31, 1937, letter. “For better or worse, I completed the basic outline of the *Cantata* right up to the final curtain.”¹¹² The draft piano-vocal score was concluded on June 5, 1937; work on the instrumentation extended to September 21.

Prokofiev’s irritation with Demchinsky was short-lived. In the same letter, Prokofiev proposes that they collaborate on another topical cantata, this one commissioned by the Moscow Conservatory. It was intended to celebrate the Soviet conquest of the highest of geographic peaks, the North Pole, and the establishment of a research station on an ice sheet located at 89°25' northern latitude. (The station existed from May 1937 to February 1938, at which time the ice began to break up and the four-man crew had to be rescued by plane.) Prokofiev described the project as follows:

While I do not like to write “for an occasion” here it must be said that the event is unique and lends itself readily to musical expression. Moreover, since this second, “little” cantata is for Conservatory students, involving simple music and comparatively modest performing resources, it would not be

difficult for me to compose, and would involve an entirely different style and means of expression than the first cantata. For the central material, I want to use in particular newspaper clippings about the discovery of the Pole. The literary quality of the material is irrelevant; what matters is that it comes hot off the press. You know from my experience with *The Gambler* and my first cantata that I like to set prose. It will of course be necessary to frame this material with other material—for example, poetry about the North, valor, and so forth. Here I once again (o, imprudence!) turn to you.¹¹³

For unknown reasons, the “North Pole” Cantata was not composed; the “October” Cantata, in contrast, was composed, but Prokofiev’s multi-year labor on the score went to waste. He would hear just one portion of the score performed live, but only after it had been recycled in another work: the *Ode to the End of the War*.¹¹⁴

The portion in question comes from movement 9 of the Cantata, one of three untitled instrumental interludes that create moods of anticipation and foreboding. The music of these interludes derives from the Cantata’s introductory movement, which opens the Pandora’s box of Russian history. Movement 1 denotes primal forces; movements 3 and 5 invoke the ghosts of the Decembrists and the participants of “Bloody Sunday,” the event that set the failed 1905 Revolution in motion; movement 9, in contrast, expresses triumph over adversity, but it is unclear whether the triumph is military or economic. The chronological placement of the movement in the Cantata’s overall scheme indicates that it concerns the fulfillment of Stalin’s first Five-Year Plan. The scalar whirls in the accordions can be interpreted as the sound of contented workers at well-oiled machines.

Movement 2, “Philosophers,” bears the meditative, reflective traits of a traditional liturgical cantata, albeit in nonliturgical guise. The highlight of the movement is the glorious alto and soprano melody that begins in measure 21 and ascends from the overlaid ostinato pattern set down by the basses and tenors in the preceding measures. The opening measures scorn those passive academics who, according to Marx, have tried but failed to “explain” the world in “various” ways. The buffa repetitions of the word “philosophers” suggest stasis and stubbornness, being stuck in one’s ways.

Movement 4, “We are marching in close rank,” includes striking text-painting devices. The melodic line rises and falls in a fashion reminiscent of

the aria "Every Valley Shall Be Exalted" from Handel's *Messiah* oratorio. To represent the Bolsheviks trudging "along a steep and narrow path," Prokofiev creates a rough and crooked line that struggles to define B minor.

The special effects of "Revolution" (movement 6) include rat-a-tatting snare drums, out-of-breath singing, and Lenin's radio voice. There are several references to Prokofiev's earlier scores, most notably *The Fiery Angel*, which narrates an apocalyptic conflict between those who believe in the occult and those who do not. An allusion to the lamentations of possessed nuns in act 5 of this opera precedes a musical depiction of the storming of the Winter Palace; the wails of the violins in the act 2, scene 2, séance conclude it. The principal characters in the opera find themselves submitting to unseen forces; much the same occurs in the Cantata, whose instrumental interludes imply the force of destiny and the inability of humans to resist it.

"Victory" (movement 7) denotes paradise, with a brass chorale ceding to a halcyon passage for the strings. The female voices describe the post-revolutionary winter of "cold," "hunger," "typhus," and general "chaos"; the lullaby strains in the violins signal that death has led to transfiguration. The cadential gesture that ends the varied melody is expanded on its final iteration to decorate the words "we nevertheless triumphed." There follows, in the second half of the movement, a vocal simulacrum of the tintinnabulation of steeple chimes. "Ice," the singers proclaim, "has broken at all corners of the earth." Then, in one of the cleverest sequences in the Cantata, Prokofiev shifts to a waltz rhythm to underscore that "a ponderous object" (capitalist oppression) "has been dislodged from its place." But the dance of the liberated proletariat no sooner begins than it ends. Prokofiev brings the movement to a close with a reference to the "measured tread" of "iron battalions" and the sound of Red Army soldiers trudging off into the distance.

The words of the Cantata's finale come neither from Marx (as originally planned) nor Pushkin (as Demchinsky suggested), but from Stalin. Having quoted Stalin in movement 8, which concerns Lenin's death, Prokofiev turned to him again in movement 10, which concerns the fulfillment of Lenin's legacy in the Soviet Constitution. The ratification of this document in December 1936 was celebrated by a Bolshoy Theater performance of Beethoven's Ode "To Joy."¹¹⁵ For Prokofiev to set Stalin was much different, of course, than for Beethoven to set Schiller. It was also much different from setting Lenin, for the simple reason that Stalin was very much alive in 1937 and, like the tsars who had preceded him, oversaw his own portrayal in the media and the arts.

The *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October* was, in Maksimenkov's opinion, a "dangerous," "politically incorrect," and potentially "criminal" experiment.¹¹⁶ And indeed the June 19, 1937, run-through of the draft piano-vocal score at the offices of the Committee on Arts Affairs was a fiasco.¹¹⁷ One attendee, the musicologist Moisey Grinberg, pointed out that even if Stalin had been left out of the mix, the Cantata would still have been denounced. Eager to settle scores, Kerzhentsev tore into Prokofiev, asking him, "Just what do you think you're doing, Sergey Sergeyevich, taking texts that belong to the people and setting them to such incomprehensible music?"¹¹⁸

The language of Prokofiev's libretto is worlds away from the banter of the bazaar; it belonged less to the people than to the bureaucrats. Kerzhentsev resisted banning the Cantata outright (there was no ruling for Molotov to overturn); he simply ensured that it went unperformed. The newly appointed State Orchestra conductor Aleksandr Gauk, who had attended the June 19 run-through, appears to have been quietly advised not to rehearse it.

Prokofiev responded to the criticism with annoyance, twice complaining to Alpers that the Cantata had irritated, even alarmed his overseers. On August 26 he grumbled about having to devote two months of the summer "scribbling a Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary," which, he added, "has already elicited more indignation than enthusiasm." "What," he mused, "will happen when they actually perform it?"¹¹⁹ Sadly, nothing happened; despite his colossal efforts to finish the score near the deadline, it was not performed, and he only received 25 percent of his commission (the remaining 75 percent being contingent upon official approval of the score).¹²⁰ Hopes for a premiere shifted from the Revolution's twentieth anniversary to its twenty-first. On New Year's Day, 1938, Prokofiev informed Alpers that

my Cantata has still not been rehearsed: it is fiendishly difficult and everyone (up to Kerzhentsev) is afraid of it. In order to soften hard hearts I wrote a different, somewhat simpler piece—*Songs of Our Days*, which has already been performed in Moscow and will probably soon be performed in Leningrad.¹²¹

Despite his cynicism, Prokofiev hoped that the Cantata would soon head into rehearsals. In January he sent a telegram from Paris to Gusman and

Lazar Kaufman (the assistant director of the Radio Committee arts division) requesting notification of the start of orchestral rehearsals.¹²² That he did not receive an answer must have puzzled him. Kerzhentsev, after all, had not prohibited the score; in fact, Prokofiev indicates that the chairman's underlings advised him to continue working on it. He thus devoted the summer of 1937 to its orchestration.¹²³ In an attempt to spur action, Prokofiev at one point proposed rehearsing the singers himself. "Owing to the difficulty of the choral parts," he told Gusman and Kaufman, "it would be good if the chorus began learning them as soon as possible, before it gets bogged down with the other works of the season."¹²⁴ The recommendation was not honored.

The setback flattened the composer, who had assumed that his vision of historical development, framed by positive depictions of human striving, would be lauded. The spine-tingling highpoint of the "Philosophers" movement signals that his effort was sincere, the first major attempt to adapt his creative energies to an explicitly Soviet political context. The work may not have been inspired by the dogma of the Revolution, but it upheld beliefs in transcendence and transformation, beliefs found in political as well as religious faiths.

When it came time to write another tribute to the Revolution a decade later, Prokofiev was still dismayed that his Cantata had not yet been performed, and that his multi-year labor had gone to waste. The work received a partial premiere on April 5, 1966, twenty-eight years after its completion, and thirteen years after Prokofiev's death. By that time Nikita Khrushchev had come and gone as the Soviet leader; in his third year in power, he had forcefully denounced the "cult of personality" surrounding Stalin. The two Stalin-based movements of the Cantata were thus excluded from the performance, which occurred at the Moscow Conservatory under the direction of Kirill Kondrashin. In place of these movements, Kondrashin reprised "Philosophers," bringing the Cantata to a rhapsodic climax.

Songs of Our Days

Having learned a painful lesson in 1937, Prokofiev made sure that his future political works—his 1939 salute to Stalin and his 1947 *Cantata for the Thirtieth Anniversary of October*—did not breach protocol. These works substitute references to the actual events of 1917 with slogans about the blossoming happiness that occasioned the rise of Soviet power. Just as Kerzhentsev had administered the denunciation of Shostakovich in the pages of *Pravda*, so he had attended to the ideological reeducation of Prokofiev at

the headquarters of the Committee on Arts Affairs. Prokofiev adjusted his creative method, but he did so less out of fear than bewildered frustration. In a notebook, he lampooned the unsuccessful run-through of the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October* as the “Battle at Kerzhentsev,” an allusion to the “Battle at [the River] Kerzhenets” scene in Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*.¹²⁵ In the scene, foreign invaders launch an attack on unsuspecting Russians.

Prokofiev channeled his disdain for Kerzhentsev into simplistically doctrinaire, rather than subversive, music. He responded to the forfeiture of the Cantata with *Songs of Our Days*, a vocal suite that self-consciously shuns dissonance, chromaticism, even the faintest deviation from the reigning tonalities of C and G major. The effort suggests a sop to the Committee on Arts Affairs, but Myaskovsky, who supplied the title, described it as an escapist diversion. “Prokofiev,” he wrote in his diary, “has composed an amusing (and splendid) suite from his mass and stage songs for soloist, chorus and orchestra.” In another entry, Myaskovsky called it “magical.”¹²⁶ Arguably the most entertaining number is “The Twenty-Year-Old” (*Dvadsatiletniy*), a through-composed treatment of a text by Samuil Marshak, a prolific writer of children’s tales about nature, animals, and the trials of growing up. (Marshak lived in the same apartment building as Prokofiev.) The song, a Gilbert-and-Sullivan-esque tongue-twister, depicts, in the male voice parts, a search for the rescuer of a child from a burning building and, in the female parts, the chatter on the street about his heroism. Likewise engaging is the tripartite cavalry song “Over the Little Bridge” (*Cherez mostik*), which sets a poem by Anton Prischelets. In this song, the composer represents the workings of memory with accelerating, syncopated hoof-beat sounds.

In a *Pravda* article titled “The Flowering of Art” Prokofiev claimed that he composed original melodies for *Songs of Our Days*, but in a style that approximated folk music.¹²⁷ The distinction between imitating and borrowing folk music was a point of pride, since he had argued, in an April 9, 1937, speech at the Composers’ Union, that his junior colleagues lacked an original approach to the national musical tradition. Rather than drawing inspiration from the folk repertoire for their mass songs, they had simply plundered it. Prokofiev’s comments stand out for their self-confidence and fearlessness: he expressed impatience with the campaign against formalism, the staleness of Soviet music, and the perception that he was a disconnected foreigner. “Yes, I’ve been in the West a lot, but this does not mean that I’ve

become a Westerner," he declared. He compromised this position, however, by boasting about his imported automobile and that he was able to assess the merits of Soviet music from an outside perspective. "A lot has been said about internal instabilities in the Composers' Union," he remarked, "but little has been said about actual creative issues," including the "challenge" of composing for the masses. Embroiled as he was in a battle to rescue his Cantata from oblivion, he tore into the leadership of the Composers' Union for its "mistakes" and "inexperience." Why, Prokofiev asked his listeners, had Soviet music fallen behind while other areas of Soviet culture strove forward? Industrialization and collectivization ensured a bright future. Why then did Soviet composers subsist on the folkloric equivalent of stale bread? Changing tack, Prokofiev offered his thoughts on how to improve the situation. The "battle against formalism," he began, is neither "a battle against perfecting and improving technique" nor a "cure-all" for bad composition. "Musiquette" (muzichka) cannot be abolished, but this does not mean it should be emulated. "Mass music should be written with the same effort as symphonic music," he adds. "It would be better to write something a little more challenging rather than a little less so."¹²⁸

Songs of Our Days shows technical skill, but sacrifices invention for academicism, becoming the folksy Soviet equivalent of one of Hindemith's *Gebrauchsmusik* compositions. The "Lullaby" (Kolibel'naya), for example, is a routine exercise in musical rhetoric, with inflected thirds and fifths clouding the soothing text. The words come from Vasiliy Lebedev-Kumach, a newspaperman-turned-poet who supplied song texts for film comedies. He worked after the Revolution for *Rabochaya gazeta* (Worker's Gazette), *Krest'yanskaya gazeta* (Peasant's Gazette), and agitprop journals. Lebedev-Kumach had all the credentials for a successful career as an official writer: military training, obedience to the Party, and affection for innocent humor. The text he provided for Prokofiev likewise evinces a profound devotion to the Stalin personality cult: "There's a man behind the Kremlin walls, / All the land knows and loves him / Your joy and happiness come from him / Stalin! That is his great name!"¹²⁹

Three other texts from *Songs of Our Days* purport to be folkloric—"Be of Good Health!" (Bud'te zdorovi!), "Golden Ukraine" (Zolotaya Ukraina), and (loosely translated) "From Sea to Shining Sea" (Ot kraya do kraya)—but actually derive from known sources. The second was written by a Ukrainian collective farm laborer whose verbal praise of the homeland made it into the October 1, 1937, issue of *Pravda*. The first and third texts came from

two established poets of optimism, Adam Rusak and Mikhaïl Inyushkin. The words may be rustic, but they are not folkloric, unless evaluated from the fantastic perspective of Stalinist propaganda. The peasant paeans to the Soviet ruler were concocted in Moscow offices. Prokofiev enhanced the illusion, informing his listeners that he had modeled the melodies of his official works on authentic Russian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian folksongs that did not in fact exist. The absence is marked in *Songs of Our Days*, whose unwavering diatonic consonance sounds nothing like Prokofiev, and nothing like folksong.

The illusion was exposed in 1962, when the publishing house Sovetskaya muzika issued a censured version of the suite, one that names the authors of the texts while stripping away their references to Stalin. “From Sea to Shining Sea” received the biggest overhaul. It was renamed “October Banner” (Oktyabr’skoye znamya), and each line was rewritten, at times to the detriment of the metric scheme. In the first version, the second strophe loosely translates as “O for Stalin, our own wise and beloved Stalin / The people are crafting a wonderful song”; in the revision, it becomes “We serve the Motherland as a single force / To make the age-old dream come true.”¹³⁰

Prokofiev earned only modest praise for *Songs of Our Days*; pandering to populism had in this instance not served him well.¹³¹ The suite was premiered on January 5, 1938, in Moscow and re-premiered on November 19, 1938, the penultimate day of the second *dekada*, a ten-day festival of Soviet music. The performances went unacknowledged in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*, a marked contrast to the praise accorded Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony and Aram Khachaturyan’s *Symphonic Poem about Stalin*.¹³²

Prokofiev did not consider his well-being at risk at the time, but most of his colleagues, Shostakovich included, lived in a state of apprehension. The NKVD (Narodniy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del, the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs) conducted regular nighttime searches of apartments; people inexplicably vanished, not to be heard from again for years, if at all. (The case of Sats, the longtime director of the Moscow Children’s Theater and the driving force behind *Peter and the Wolf*, is characteristic. On August 21, 1937, she was arrested on spurious charges of treason and sentenced to a Siberian work camp for five years. Her two children became wards of the State, and her apartment was converted into communal housing for the families of NKVD officers.)¹³³ Through it all, Prokofiev maintained the air—the external semblance—of indifference; Lina did not. Her nerves frayed, and she suffered extended periods of insomnia. The anxieties fueled arguments;

afterward, Prokofiev either withdrew into his study or left the apartment altogether. Lina asked him to honor his pledge to her that if she did not want to stay in Moscow, they would both return to Paris. He commented: "What I promised then can't be done now."¹³⁴ Elsewhere, Lina described the anxious, strained atmosphere in their building: "One night I learned to my great distress that an acquaintance had been taken away. I said that I wanted to go back to my mother. Sergey answered: 'Wait, it's temporary, it will all pass.'"¹³⁵

For Lina, the situation was dire but not yet hopeless, for Prokofiev managed to arrange one more trip abroad for the two of them. Their children would remain behind in the care of a nanny, transferring from the English-language school where they had begun their studies in Moscow to a Russian-language school. The former was shut down without notice, forcing the two boys to adjust to new lessons in a new language without their parents there to support them.¹³⁶

The Cultural Diplomat (Continued)

In coordination with his representatives abroad, Prokofiev organized a series of official and unofficial performances for the start of 1938. The schedule included chamber and orchestral concerts, sometimes hastily arranged, in Prague, Paris, London, and the United States (Boston, Boulder, Colorado Springs, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, and Washington). Permission for the excursion did not come easily, as evidenced by Prokofiev's self-effacing petition to his nemesis Kerzhentsev (soon to be terminated as chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs), in which he describes the potential political benefits of the trip:

Aware of the significance of the historic events that are taking place in the Union, I have attempted to respond to the Twentieth Anniversary of the October Revolution and the elections. Having completed the Cantata, which you know about, I have composed a great choral and orchestral suite, which is straightforward and melodic, to contemporary texts from *Pravda*, as well as marches for wind band and songs for massed voices. I took part in the *dekada* of Soviet Music and the pre-election concerts. It has been suggested that I conduct concerts of my own works in London, Paris,

and Prague, as well as performing in a series of concerts in the USA.

There follows the promise that “in the course of numerous talks and interviews I shall have the opportunity to make favorable reference to the success of Soviet music.”¹³⁷

The promise was sincere, but it did not expedite permission to travel. That permission came late, forcing Prokofiev to postpone his departure for Paris and limit his time there to just two days and one concert. His performances in the United States were jeopardized.¹³⁸ A January 17 letter preserved at the Russian Ministry of External Affairs hints at the difficulties he and Lina confronted in seeking to exchange their internal passports for external ones. It was written by an official with VOKS (the All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad) to his counterpart in London:

We telegraphed you to the effect that the composer S. Prokofiev left on January 12 for Paris and London. Unfortunately, Prokofiev's departure only became definitely clear in the very last days and he left without managing to reach an agreement with us about his appearances with London VOKS. We do not even know exactly how long he will spend in Paris.¹³⁹

Prokofiev did, in the end, perform in London at a VOKS concert—an event, like all of the other events on his schedule, overseen by Soviet officials. Regular reports on his activities were submitted from the Soviet embassies in Paris, London, and Washington to Moscow.

The Soviet ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ivan Maysky, hosted a Prokofiev recital on January 27, 1938. Before leaving London for the United States, Prokofiev gave Maysky the manuscript of a mass song that he had composed in 1935 in honor of the People's Commissar for Defense, Marshall Kliment Voroshilov. On Prokofiev's request, Maysky forwarded the song to its dedicatee, Voroshilov, for his approval, requesting that it be performed during the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the establishment of the Red Army.¹⁴⁰ He also reported on the overall reception Prokofiev received in London to the new chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs, Aleksey Nazarov: “I consider it necessary to report to you,” Maysky began, “that in the last days of January our eminent composer S. S. Prokofiev came

through London on the way to America.” There ensues a positive overview of Prokofiev’s three concerts in the city—at Queen’s Hall, the Embassy, and a reception at the Earl of Listowel’s House—and a brief description of his encounters with British government officials.¹⁴¹

In the United States, Prokofiev performed for several hundred guests at a Soviet Embassy function in Washington.¹⁴² He was also the focal point of a reception and musicale a week later at the American-Russian Institute in New York. At the embassy concert he played his Second Piano Sonata and accompanied his wife—who, according to Duke, possessed an appealing but unfocused voice¹⁴³—in a pre-approved program of folksong settings and ballads by Shalva Azmayparashvili, Konstantin Makarov-Rakitin, Lev Shvarts, Aleksandr Zatayevich, Khachaturyan, and Myaskovsky.¹⁴⁴ The first two composers on the list—contributing, respectively, the “Shepherd’s Song of Georgia” and “I Drink to Mary’s Health”—had studied with Prokofiev at the Moscow Conservatory. Intended to represent the friendships among the Soviet peoples, the Washington event convinced at least one reporter, Hope Ridings Miller, that “the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics can hold its own against any country in the field of music.”¹⁴⁵

The events in Paris (a concert with Pacheloup), Prague (a reception at the Soviet Embassy), and London came near the start of Prokofiev and Lina’s period abroad; those in New York and Washington were at the end. The couple crossed the Atlantic on the *Normandie* between January 29 and February 3; after arriving in the United States, they parted company, with Lina staying in the New York area while Prokofiev headed north and west. In Boston he conducted the American premiere of *Peter and the Wolf*, the suite from *The Tale of the Buffoon*, and the Second Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*, trusting that these works would succeed where others had fallen flat. Indeed, he admitted to Warren Storey Smith, critic for the *Boston Post*, that the performance of *Peter* was a “rebuke to Boston for having failed to appreciate certain of his more complicated works, in particular the Fourth Symphony.”¹⁴⁶ Before his March 25 and 26 concerts, he had decided to settle a score with the “supercilious” critics who had panned the Fourth Symphony, which had been commissioned by Koussevitzky and had received its premiere in Boston in 1930. Yet it had been dismissed by local critics as being “written in too much of a hurry.” Prokofiev informed a *Time* magazine reporter that because audiences in Boston could not grasp his “serious music,” he was obliged to pander to them with “simple things.”¹⁴⁷ He did not report that he found himself in a comparable predicament in Moscow and Leningrad, where official attitudes,

rather than public responses, influenced his activities. The press kit that accompanied his American performances exaggerated his interest in writing accessible music: "Still another public interest of Prokofiev's," the kit reads, "is the musical advancement of the large masses of Russian people who are now flocking to the concert halls. In some instances not yet able to understand and appreciate complicated music, these concert audiences are being introduced to the larger standard repertoire by means of specially composed popular songs for chorus, marches for military band, etc. In this respect it is Prokofiev's aim to compose music that remains simple and melodious."¹⁴⁸

When interviewed, Prokofiev spoke positively on behalf of Soviet culture, but his tone was less upbeat than a year before. Avoiding any mention of recent political setbacks, he talked in inflated terms about the comforts provided by his "4 incomes": royalties from an ever-increasing number of performances; royalties from the publications of his works; commissions from theaters, orchestras, and film studios; and "modest but adequate" stipends from the Union of Soviet Composers. Moscow musicians, Prokofiev alleged, lived better than Wall Street entrepreneurs. Indeed, the reporter who spoke to him on this subject described his "cool and pleasantly untemperamental manner of address," which "bespoke the industrial executive rather than the creator of music." Prokofiev appeared to represent "a new social attitude towards the arts."¹⁴⁹

To those who hosted him in the United States, Prokofiev came across as introverted and intemperate. Such was the impression he made on Jean Cranmer, a philanthropist who "improvised" the Denver Symphony Orchestra into existence. Speaking to a *Denver Post* journalist in 1972, Cranmer recalled the discomfort of billeting Prokofiev for ten days: "He hardly spoke to anyone, even though he did know English. He'd sit through a meal just not saying a word. Nobody could get anything out of him." Before giving piano recitals in Boulder and Colorado Springs, he conducted his Classical Symphony and performed his First Piano Concerto in Denver with the orchestra. The score of the Concerto, Cranmer lamented, was printed on "terrible Russian paper" which "had been re-fingered and erased and re-fingered again."¹⁵⁰ Since the orchestra had not had adequate time to rehearse the February 18 event, it was something of a shambles, with the orchestra unable to "keep pace" and the conductor, Horace Tureman, "working like a Volga boatman in an effort to tug and draw violins, violas, woodwinds, brasses, timpani and percussion into some sort of unity."¹⁵¹ Upset with how things had gone, Prokofiev rudely told Cranmer after the post-concert

reception that he “didn’t like anyone who was there.” Despite—or perhaps because of—his bad temper, she decided to win him over, taking him to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at a local movie hall.¹⁵² He was smitten with the film, asking to see it again the next night, but less than smitten with Cranmer. He later wrote a scathing letter to her about the quality of the Denver Symphony Orchestra, its conductor, and its board of directors—all of which, he huffed, she defended out of “false pride.”¹⁵³ He nonetheless thanked her for her hospitality.

From Denver, Prokofiev traveled to Los Angeles, arriving on February 26 for a three-week stay. He had not planned on going there: the tour of the United States was to have been limited to the East Coast and Midwest. The invitation came from Rudolph Polk, a onetime violinist, musical director, and artist’s agent who sought to engage Prokofiev as a Hollywood film composer. In a January 4, 1941, letter to Koussevitzky, Polk reported that Prokofiev had detoured from Colorado to California in 1938 “at my request.” “During the visit,” Polk continues, “I took [Prokofiev] to see Walt Disney with the idea of selling *Peter and the Wolf* for one of his animated cartoons.”¹⁵⁴ On February 28, Polk and Prokofiev met with Disney and the composer Leigh Harline, who had just been contracted to write the music for *Pinocchio*, at the Hyperion Studio. Prokofiev played through *Peter and the Wolf* and declared, in the flush of the moment, that he had composed it with Disney in mind. The famous director was greatly impressed.

On March 4, Prokofiev wrote to his mother-in-law with the news that he had also, as soon as he arrived in Los Angeles, received a proposal from Paramount “to do music for a film and offered a nice big sum.” He could not accept it, he lamented, because it would entail remaining in Los Angeles for ten more weeks, long after he was expected back in Moscow. “Thus,” he lamented, the proposal “had to be turned down, and now we’re in negotiations about a future season.”¹⁵⁵ Elizabeth Bergman, who has studied Prokofiev’s last trips to the United States in detail, reveals that Prokofiev took a tour through the Paramount facilities in the second week of March, presumably still enchanted by the proposal. He was guided by Boris Morros, “a native of St. Petersburg, a cellist (who claimed to be Gregor Pyatigorsky’s first teacher), Russian émigré, and music director at Paramount from 1936 to 1940.” Morros was also, Bergman points out, a Soviet agent.¹⁵⁶

On March 13, the Russian-born stage and film director of Armenian origin Rouben Mamoulian arranged a dinner in Prokofiev’s honor at the Victor Hugo Inn at Laguna Beach, after which he and the other guests returned

to Mamoulian's house for an impromptu recital. Lina, who arrived in Los Angeles after her husband, recalls mingling with the stars Mary Pickford, Marlene Dietrich, Gloria Swanson, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., and, on a less glamorous note, the composer Arnold Schoenberg.¹⁵⁷ She encountered some of these celebrities at the Mamoulian gathering, and the rest at the March 10 Academy Awards at the Biltmore Hotel.¹⁵⁸ On March 27, just three days before he left the United States for Paris and Moscow, Prokofiev sent a pair of letters to Polk authorizing him to negotiate a contract with Disney Motion Pictures for the rights to *Peter and the Wolf*. Negotiations began in his absence on May 20, 1940, and a contract was signed on February 4, 1941.¹⁵⁹ Narrated by Sterling Holloway, the animated version of the score reached theaters in 1946 as part of a compilation titled *Make Mine Music*.

Prokofiev enthused about his California adventure, telling his sons, for example, that "in Hollywood, they manufacture entire homes, castles, and even cities out of cardboard." Besides visiting a set, he had been "*chez le papa de Mickey Mouse*."¹⁶⁰ To Myaskovsky, he boasted that Hollywood "showed unexpected interest" in his music. He added that, in order to pursue this interest, and in order to fulfill his promises to conduct in Boston and perform "several concerts of a political character [the Soviet Embassy events]," he needed to extend his time abroad. The letter (written on letterhead of the Roosevelt Hotel on Hollywood Boulevard) then becomes fretful. Cognizant of the fragile duality of his existence, Prokofiev grumbles to Myaskovsky about the lack of a final verdict on his Cantata. Kaufman, to whom he had written a few days before, had "broken his promise" to arrange for a reading. He expected little more from other colleagues, including Grinberg: "I won't be surprised if Grinberg also fails to keep his word, that is, he doesn't engrave the promised scores, and that Gauk isn't learning the Cantata."¹⁶¹ Myaskovsky was unable to put his friend's mind at ease. In his March 18 reply, he confirmed what Prokofiev had been suspecting all along: Gauk had not prepared the Cantata, since he was devoting all of his time to performances of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. "Try not to think about your Cantata," Myaskovsky drily appended.¹⁶²

For Prokofiev, the negative news from Moscow, coupled with the positive news from Los Angeles, must have fueled the nagging sensation that the Soviet regime had altogether deceived him. Despite his declarations that the regime published and performed everything he wrote, his recent works had not received premieres. He did not articulate his thoughts about the difficulties to his European and American friends, but some of them noted

a change in his demeanor. His confidant Paitchadze recalls that during Prokofiev's last trip abroad "he was very reserved, and while he did not express regrets about the change in his life, it seemed that even with me, someone he had known intimately for many years, he feared being candid." Both he and Lina pledged, however, "that they would travel abroad again next year." They bade farewell to Paitchadze with the words "until we meet again."¹⁶³

Prokofiev ended his time in the United States with appearances in Boston and New York, where Duke greeted him with the exciting news that he just received a telegram from a Hollywood agent offering Prokofiev the outlandish sum of "\$2,500 a week" to compose for cinema. (Duke is either misremembering or exaggerating here: the sum was actually a onetime offer of \$1,500 for the rights to *Peter and the Wolf*.)¹⁶⁴ Duke further claims that he showed Prokofiev

the telegram exultantly; there was a flicker of interest for a mere instant, then, his face set, his oversize lips petulant, he said gruffly: "That's nice bait, but I won't swallow it. I've got to go back to Moscow, to my music and my children. And now that that's settled, will you come to Macy's with me? I've got to buy a whole roomful of things you can't get in Russia—just look at Lina's list." The list was imposing, and we went to Macy's department store, another sample of capitalistic bait designed by the lackeys of Wall Street to be swallowed by oppressed workers. Although he wouldn't admit it, Serge enjoyed himself hugely in the store—he loved gadgets and trinkets of every description. Suddenly he turned to me, his eyes peculiarly moist, his voice even gruffer than usual: "You know, Dima, it occurred to me that I may not be back for quite some time... I don't suppose it would be wise for you to come to Russia, would it?" "No, I don't suppose it would," I answered, smiling bravely, my happiness abruptly gone. I never saw Prokofiev again.¹⁶⁵

The sadness of the good-bye is echoed in the memoir of Berthe Malko (the wife of the conductor Nikolay Malko), with whom Prokofiev spent a care-free evening in Prague at the start of his 1938 trip: "When we parted and shook hands, he said, 'So where will we see each other next time and go

to the cinema? Why don't we say New York?' I never saw him again; they [Soviet officials] stopped allowing him to travel abroad."¹⁶⁶

Prokofiev and Lina boarded the *Normandie* and left a fogged-in New York on March 31, their marriage, according to Duke, showing severe strain.¹⁶⁷ Upon arriving in Paris on April 6, they checked into the Hotel Astor. That evening, Prokofiev attended a reception at the Soviet Embassy in Paris. Shortly thereafter, he boarded a train for the long ride back to Moscow, his children, and his apartment. Lina followed him on May 7, after spending time with her mother.¹⁶⁸

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DropBooks

Seeking the Formula,

1938–1939

Following their conversation at Macy's department store in 1938, Vernon Duke did not see Prokofiev again, and in the years ahead he received just two letters (one survives) and a telegram from him. On April 5, 1940, he received a jocular letter that described, in French, the Leningrad premiere of *Romeo and Juliet* as a triumph beyond the imagining of the hitherto restive dancers, who came to the conclusion, after "15 curtain calls," that the watered-down novelties of the ballet "might be acceptable after all." Continuing his habit of ribbing Duke for his commitment to popular song, Prokofiev asked him what he had been composing both "by way of music" and "by way of tra-la-la."¹ Prokofiev comments that the war in Europe prevented him from traveling to the United States, where, one imagines, he would have immersed himself in Broadway and Hollywood musicals—if for no other reason than to alleviate his Moscow anxieties.

During the war years, Duke sent Prokofiev regular updates on his musical activities (these included the oft-delayed New York premiere of the oratorio *The End of St. Petersburg*, and the completion of his first book show for Broadway, *Cabin in the Sky*), which Prokofiev did not acknowledge until March 15, 1946, when he dispatched a telegram reading: "Thanks for very interesting letters. Please send scores. Letter follows. Greetings." The "letter" that followed a few days later is presumed lost; its contents cannot be verified. Duke simply describes it as a "strange" document "written in three languages," with "French, English, and German words artfully mixed, so as to baffle the censor, most likely." Strange, too, is Duke's cloak-and-dagger

assertion that no sooner had he showed the letter to his friends in New York than it “mysteriously vanished.”²

Duke's loss of contact with Prokofiev attests to the radical changes in the latter's career. On April 16, 1938, Prokofiev returned to the Soviet Union from his three-month trip abroad and never left again. Having reestablished contact with colleagues in Moscow and Leningrad, he lost touch with those in Paris and New York. Despite the resistance he met in organizing his 1938 trip, Prokofiev did not foresee being deprived of the opportunity to travel: the available evidence indicates that he intended to go abroad at least once a year, and that he had no intention of passing up opportunities for performances and premieres in Western Europe and North America. Although he turned it down, the proposal he received from Paramount could not have been far from his mind as he composed mass songs—the socialist equivalent to capitalist “tra-la-la”—for official occasions.

Prokofiev, it bears noting, received his first offer to write “fully accessible music for the masses” from an American rather than a Soviet source.³ In 1930, Gloria Swanson asked him to create the score for the romantic comedy *What a Widow!* Predating *Lieutenant Kizhe* by four years, this rare film concerns a well-to-do, newly single socialite who finds herself pursued by four bachelors: a lawyer, a violinist, a baritone, and a lounge lizard. Prokofiev and Swanson did not come to an agreement (the deadline was tight, and he asked for too high a fee), but the project got him thinking; he began to weigh the pros and cons of composing for commercial film.⁴ His 1934–36 notebook includes a list of the American, French, and German films that he saw (primarily) in Paris, with remarks about their casts, plots, and scores.⁵ Of the 1936 musical *Sing Me a Love Song*, for example, he wrote: “Singing all the time, owner poses as a clerk in her own store. Rescue from bankruptcy. Kleptomaniac is apprehended.” His tastes were eclectic, veering toward musical comedies. He enjoyed *San Francisco* (1936), a rags-to-riches story about a singer who escapes the squalor of the cabaret scene to become an opera star. She lands the part of Marguerite in Charles Gounod's *Faust*, and her career ascends. The spate of vocal performances “culminates [with an] earthquake.” Prokofiev also enjoyed *Du bist mein Glück*, a Beniamino Gigli musical with “fine” operatic inserts. Other 1936 favorites included *Theodora Goes Wild*, a lark about a “provincial town” (Lynnfield, Connecticut) whose church-going residents are scandalized by the publication of a salacious novel (*The Sinner*) by a local writer, and *A Woman Rebels*, a Katharine Hepburn “melodrama” about the “struggle against women's rights.” The composer favored detective

films (especially singing detective ones): his 1936 list includes three examples, the most original being *Great Guy*, which pits a detective at the New York Department of Weights and Measures against corrupt deli owners. With the exception of an odd French dub of *Tarzan Escapes* (*Tarzan s'évade*), Prokofiev's taste in the fantastic and the surreal seemed unbounded: he drew special attention to the 1935 film *Die Ewige Maske* (*The Eternal Mask*), about a schizophrenic who takes a journey through his own mind looking for a cure. In Prague in January 1938, he and Berthe Malko saw the 1935 René Clair film *The Ghost Goes West*, a trifling romantic fantasy about a haunted castle that is relocated, brick by brick, from Scotland to Florida.

Had Prokofiev not returned to the Soviet Union from the United States, he might have contributed to Hollywood's Golden Age. His wife seems to have contemplated, perhaps naively, leaving the Soviet Union to reside long term in Los Angeles. Lawrence Creath Ammons, a Christian Scientist practitioner with whom Lina consulted in Paris, commented on the prospect in a March 15, 1938, letter to her. It began with a jarringly benign comment about European military and political affairs:

It was good to hear from you even if it did recount the exhaustion of New York life. Yes, doesn't it make all these European cities seem like small villages? But just at present they are active ones with Hitler taking possession of Europe. This week's lesson page 95 line 12 shows what it all is but we have to see that we are on the "side of Science and peace" and thus bring more of it into one personal experience.

Hollywood sounds promising and if it opens as you both hope I trust that that heaven planned place may be your quiet abode with the children for a few years. It has so much of the real Science about it there even if there is another artificial side in the movie life. Ideal American atmosphere for raising children! Page 591 line 16 tells us what Mind is and that it is our one and only Mind which outlines our future and present and we have only to accept the divine outline every day here we are on earth.⁶

The Hollywood promise went unrealized, as did the prospect of living, as Ammons put it, on the "side of Science and peace." Returning to the

Soviet Union, an illusory reality of another sort, was a traumatic, wrenching experience for Lina, even if she, like her husband, fully expected to travel abroad again.

Prokofiev lost the chance to work in Hollywood, but he could by the end of 1938 take some comfort in the fact that the arch-patriotic Soviet film *Alexander Nevsky*, for which he provided remarkable music, was playing in the largest theaters in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Minsk. No fewer than eight hundred prints were shipped around the nation.⁷ It is perhaps fitting that strains from the now-classic score tend to resurface, in paraphrased form, in Hollywood blockbusters.

Hamlet

Intense work on *Alexander Nevsky* (discussed in chapter 5) followed the premiere of Radlov's staging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at the Leningrad Academic Theater of Drama named after A. S. Pushkin (the former Imperial Aleksandrinsky Theater). Prokofiev received a commission to compose incidental music for the production in August 1937, during work on the orchestration of his ill-fated *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*. The play had been staged in experimental fashion throughout the 1930s, but by the time Radlov directed it, the Committee on Arts Affairs had launched its campaign against experimentalism. Radlov's staging, though successful, marked a creative retreat. It served as a pointed rebuttal to the madcap version of the play mounted in 1932 by Nikolay Akimov. That version, featuring incidental music by Shostakovich, seemed to comment on the power struggles that engulfed the Kremlin in the years following Lenin's death. "Almost unavoidably," the Slavic scholar Zdeněk Stříbrný notes, "Akimov's grotesque production was attacked by Communist critics and soon removed from the repertoire despite the fact that crowds of Muscovites were spending hours in ticket lines to see it and one New York critic called it 'the best show in Europe.'"⁸ By 1938, however, political commentary of this sort was impossible. Radlov was forced to stage *Hamlet* along party lines.

Radlov resolved to strip away the complexities of the play, to represent Hamlet not as a ruminating melancholic but as a person of action, a force for change. In a May 9, 1938, article for *Krasnaya gazeta*, the director defined Hamlet as a "new man," less a "pitiful pessimist" than a "warrior" whose "indecisiveness" stemmed from "the enormous difficulty of the task that lay on his shoulders, and the persistent voice of his vigilant conscience, which

so distinguishes him from his colonizing and plundering contemporaries.” Radlov added that his production would right the wrongs committed by Akimov in his misguided, “formalist” transposition of the play.⁹ It would also atone for the anthroposophy-inspired interpretation staged in 1924 at the Second Moscow Arts Theater (MKhAT 2). The Hamlet of that staging, realized by Mikhaïl Chekhov, experienced something akin to a disintegration of consciousness—an anti-Soviet phenomenon.¹⁰

To fulfill his aims, Radlov gave Prokofiev specific instructions as to the nature of the music that he wanted for *Hamlet*. These instructions tend to be paradoxical. He called on Prokofiev to compose ghost music for the first scene but pointed out that the result could not be “mystical.” Mysticism, Radlov recognized, was anathema to Stalinist-era aesthetics. He also requested that Prokofiev compose four songs for the scene of Ophelia’s descent into madness, but he did not want these songs to be irrational—likewise anathema to Stalinist-era aesthetics. “These are genuine little folk songs,” the director told the composer, “I do not think that Ophelia’s madness ought to produce an inaccurate rendering of the melodies themselves.”¹¹ While she could not sound mad, Radlov conceded that she would at least have to appear so. He asked Prokofiev to append a postlude to the second of the songs, during which Ophelia would begin to dance erratically.

Prokofiev worked on the score intermittently through the fall of 1937. He did not complete it, however, until February 1938, while sailing to the United States. The orchestration was a logistical headache. Following his arrival in New York, Prokofiev sent his assistant, Pavel Lamm, instructions for orchestrating the parts, twice urging him to finish a part of the task in haste.¹²

Despite the delay, Prokofiev exceeded Radlov’s expectations. His music for *Hamlet* comprises ten numbers, the most important being the music for the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, the murdered King of Denmark. “There is no mysticism here,” Prokofiev wrote in his program notes for the production, “which was how Shakespeare himself conceived it.”¹³ There ensues a march and fanfares for Claudius, “splendid” music that symbolizes the “brilliance with which the usurper king seeks to surround himself.” Prokofiev next supplied music for the play-within-the-play, “The Mousetrap.” Hamlet instructs the players to enact the death of his father, the intent being to provoke Claudius into revealing his guilt. Prokofiev conceived a gavotte for this scene, with the first and last sections representing what he called “outer cheer,” the middle section “hidden tragedy.” For Ophelia,

Prokofiev composed four short songs in Elizabethan-era style.¹⁴ Her suicide by drowning is marked by a sardonic gravedigger's chorus. For the arrival of the Norwegian Prince Fortinbras in the final scene, Prokofiev provided a sober, ponderous march, one that reverts back to the chromatic strains of the opening ghost music. The opening and closing numbers in the score, which resonate with each other, find Prokofiev focusing on the theme of death. Hamlet is tormented by his father's death, guilt-stricken by Ophelia's, and caught up with thoughts of his own mortality. In the final scene, Radlov shows him reconciling with the fundamental uncertainties of death: it is neither positive nor negative, neither ennobling nor debasing. These uncertainties are maintained in Prokofiev's score: the soaring violin melody of the concluding march, for example, is undercut by heartbeat-like thuds in the bass drum and corseted by discordant trumpets and cornets. The significance of the march lies in its essential militarism. Fortinbras, the spiritual heir to Hamlet's war-mongering father, has ascended to the throne. In Radlov's staging, the same actor played the ghost and Fortinbras, just to emphasize that order has been restored in Denmark. The discord that Prokofiev builds into the march comments on the terrible cost of this restoration.

For the very last measures of the march, however, Prokofiev, in consultation with Radlov, fashioned an uplifting apotheosis: "A triumphant march, or rather an adagio in march rhythm, provides the backdrop for the last words of the dying Hamlet. Scarcely audible at first, it gradually ascends to the triumphant C major on which the curtain falls."¹⁵ In keeping with the precepts of his chosen faith—Christian Science—Prokofiev wittingly or unwittingly devised an apotheosis for the score that serves as a paean to the human spirit, the manifestation of the divine. The divine did not have a place in Soviet theater, of course, but the transcendent did. Prokofiev's ending pleased Radlov, for it allowed him to represent Hamlet as a positive hero whose decisions, however agonized, illustrated his adherence to a higher purpose—the betterment of humankind.¹⁶ To accommodate Radlov, Prokofiev appears to have reimagined the pursuit of a spiritual ideal as the pursuit of a political ideal; the teachings of Christian Science metamorphosed into those of Marxist-Leninism. Radlov told Prokofiev that

Fortinbras's final march represents Shakespeare's constant, calm, trusting optimism. Heroes and villains die, but at the very moment of death, "there will be young life" and Shakespeare loves and has confidence in life. The true, courageous

and optimistic ending of the play will depend of your music, dear Sergey Sergeevich.¹⁷

The “young life” to which Radlov alludes is that of a new world built upon the ruins of the old one.¹⁸ The triumphant conclusion helped to make Radlov’s staging of *Hamlet* at the Leningrad Academic Theater of Drama a success.

Given that his music for *Boris Godunov* and *Eugene Onegin* had not been performed, Prokofiev was doubtless relieved to see *Hamlet* reach the stage, and even more so to read the flattering reviews.¹⁹ He took active part in the rehearsals and attended several performances. (Radlov’s *Hamlet* ran for several seasons; Dmitriy Dudnikov performed the lead role seventy times, after which Boris Smirnov took it over.)²⁰ Lina, however, did not see the staging, for reasons that neither she nor her husband anticipated. Although she planned to travel from Moscow to Leningrad for the May 15 premiere, she did not board the train, because her travel papers were not in order.

This incident was the first signal that Lina—and Prokofiev—had lost a crucial freedom. In 1932, the Soviet government decreed that the residents of large urban centers had to obtain an internal passport, the purpose being to control the movement of the population. The police (*militsiya*) thereafter relied on “passport sweeps in cities as a primary way to bring in tens of thousands of people who fit the profile of the socially harmful—criminals and associates of criminals, the unemployed, beggars, prostitutes, itinerants, and other socially marginal populations.”²¹ Entire categories of citizens were prohibited from living in major cities or even being within one hundred kilometers of them. For a passport to be valid, it needed to list the bearer’s date and place of birth, ethnic origin, address, education, place and type of work, marital status, and (for men) military service experience and readiness, with each entry stamped at a police station at the place of permanent residence. To further complicate matters, passports needed to be renewed every three, five, or ten years depending on the bearer’s status and age (citizens forty-five and older were granted nonexpiring passports). If the bearer needed to leave his or her city of residence for more than twenty-four hours, he or she needed to obtain a permit (*spravka*) and to report at the police station at the place of arrival. To change cities, he or she would have to de-register the old address and register the new one. Standing in line at the police station became something of an endurance test.

Upon returning to the Soviet Union from abroad in early 1938, Prokofiev exchanged his external passport for his internal one bear-

ing a Moscow residency stamp. Following this transaction, his ability to travel abroad came to an abrupt halt: the NKID henceforth declined to give him back his external passport, with various reasons being invented to explain the official change in his status from *vīyezdnoy* (allowed to travel) to *nevīyezdnoy* (disallowed). Even having the external passport would not have enabled him to leave the country, since he would also have needed to obtain an exit permit (*razresheniye na vīyezd zagranitsu*) from the police, issued on behalf of the NKVD. The setback was not, of course, announced to him—information regarding an individual's travel status was classified—nor did it at first affect him, since he had planned to confine his travels to the RSFSR in 1938. Lina, however, had a much harder time. On May 14, she went to the NKID to exchange her external passport for her internal one, but was told that the latter had expired on May 5, and that she needed to obtain a new one at the passport desk of her local police station. There she was told that the passport would take several days to be issued and, adding insult to injury, that her passport photographs were the wrong size. She wrote, with sarcasm surely intended, that instead of traveling to Leningrad to see *Hamlet*, she spent the day “standing in line with the polite citizens” of Moscow.²²

The incident was galling, and it increased Lina's sense of apartment-bound isolation. Once cosmopolitan, she was now treated as an average Muscovite and subject to bureaucratic harassment. Opportunities to perform declined. She desperately wanted to return to France, and asked her husband to ascertain the procedures for procuring an exit permit. It remains unclear if he sought to do so.

Socialist Realism

For Prokofiev, the bureaucratic malfeasance was attenuated by professional accomplishment. During the period in question, he donned the mantle of a people's artist. *Hamlet*, his second (and greatest) success in the domain of incidental music, marked the start of his attitudinal adjustment, and *Alexander Nevsky*, his second (and greatest) success in the domain of film music, marked the finish.

Like most of the text-based works composed by Prokofiev in the years ahead, the film reflected, to different degrees, the tenets of Socialist Realism, the official artistic doctrine of the Soviet system. The doctrine came into existence in 1932, when the Communist Party Central Committee dissolved the

proletarian arts organizations. The subsequent regulation of creative activity necessitated the fashioning of a creative protocol, one that would inform—if not dictate—the form and content of Stalinist art. The most famous example of Socialist Realism, Gorky's novel *Mother* (1906), predates the propagandizing of the term by almost three decades. The novel came to be seen in the late 1930s, however, as an ideal embodiment of three socialist realist principles: *partiynost'* (Party-mindedness), *narodnost'* (people-mindedness), and *ideynost'* (ideological content). The doctrine initially included a fourth principle, *klassovost'*, or class-mindedness, but it was excluded after 1936, when the government began to promote the concept of a classless society. In a classic study, Katerina Clark argues that socialist realist literature declined in quality from innovation to formulaic repetition.²³ In a caustic polemic, the exiled writer Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky) contends that the doctrine placed a paradoxical burden on Soviet artists:

A socialist, i.e., a purposeful, a religious art cannot be produced with the literary method of the nineteenth century called “realism.” And a really faithful representation of life cannot be achieved in a language based on teleological concepts.²⁴

The “reality” of Socialist Realism is not the flawed reality of the present, but the perfect reality of the future, the existence guaranteed by historical movement. The characters in socialist realist literature are typecast according to an aesthetic “pleasure principle”—namely, the ability to detect evil, most often within their own consciousnesses.²⁵ They live according to strict moral codes, all reflecting their steadfast faith in the righteousness of the revolutionary cause.

The doctrine found timorous expression in the 1937 novella *I Am a Son of the Working People* by Valentin Katayev, which Prokofiev chose as the subject for his first opera on a Soviet theme (*Semyon Kotko*). Prokofiev recalled that the novella was brought to his attention by Gusman, a trusted contact who had been involved in the commissioning of *Lieutenant Kizhe*, the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, and several smaller works.²⁶ Katayev, however, recalled that the suggestion came from the writer Count Aleksey Tolstoy, a mutual acquaintance.²⁷ (Tolstoy, an opportunistic and duplicitous bureaucrat, renounced his noble lineage and his years of exile in Paris and Berlin to become a devoted servant of—and apologist for—the

Stalinist regime. In 1938, he managed to take on the theme of themes, Lenin and Stalin in their public and private lives, transform it into a potboiler about the post-revolutionary civil war, and convert the resulting mélange into a successful play.)²⁸ It may be, of course, that both Gusman and Tolstoy pitched Katayev's novella to Prokofiev. Prokofiev might have also first asked Tolstoy to be his collaborator, since the writer was, as he somewhat cynically observed in 1927, such a "good little Soviet citizen."²⁹ He was also an experienced librettist.³⁰ Rather than an opera, Prokofiev and Tolstoy decided, toward the end of 1938, to collaborate on a ballet—Prokofiev informed his Paris assistant Mikhaíl Astrov (Michel Astrot) that he had a commission for it—but nothing came of the initiative.³¹

I Am a Son of the Working People had a long shelf life in the Soviet Union. Editions were printed in 1937 and 1938, the latter with illustrations. Katayev turned the novella into a popular stage play for the Vakhtangov Theater in Moscow and the Pushkin Theater in Leningrad. It was even made into an action film called—after the opening sentence—*A Soldier Came from the Front*.³² Prokofiev settled on the novella after a long search for a subject and a creative approach that would, as he put it in a 1932 newspaper article, address "the heroism of construction, the new [Soviet] man, struggle and the overcoming of obstacles."³³

I Am a Son of the Working People narrates a conflict between Bolsheviks, anti-Bolsheviks, and invading Germans in the immediate post-revolutionary years. The hero, Semyon Kotko, is a World War I soldier who returns to his native Ukrainian village after four years at the Romanian Front; the villain, Tkachenko, is an embittered kulak who colludes with menacing German officers to reclaim his confiscated estate. Central to the plot is the long-standing romance between Semyon and Sofya, who just happens to be Tkachenko's teenage daughter, and the blossoming romance between Mikola, an army cadet, and Frosya, Semyon's mischievous little sister. A tragic subplot involves the valiant sailor Tsaryov and his kindhearted fiancée, Lyubka. The sailor is hanged by Tkachenko's allies for his pro-Bolshevist sympathies; Lyubka loses her mind with grief. The crime occurs at the end of chapter 23, in which the Germans loot and burn down the village. Once Semyon and his Red Army cohorts set their minds to it (that is to say, once they realize their calling), they quickly rout the Germans. The climax of the battle comes in chapter 28, when Semyon, acting on orders from the Red Army high command, lobbs a grenade into a church and rescues Sofya from forced marriage to one of Tkachenko's thugs. The novella's epilogue transports the hero and

heroine through time and space to Red Square for a military parade. Semyon (now a well-to-do director of an aluminum plant) and Sofya stand on tiptoe to watch their son march by. They also hear Stalin make a pledge of allegiance to Lenin. (Prokofiev omitted this scene from his operatic version of the novella.)

In devising the plot, Katayev relied on his personal memory of the civil war period (a native of Odessa, he had covered the conflict for a hometown newspaper). He also relied on a collection of documents about the Bolshevik “intervention” in Ukraine that had, he claimed, “fallen into his hands.”³⁴ The papers came from the archive of *Pravda*, where Katayev worked as a journalist, and contained the orders of the commander of the German occupation in southern Ukraine in 1918.³⁵ It is doubtful that Katayev simply came across the documents by chance; rather, his remark intimates that the subject of the novella had been assigned to him. In the late 1930s, the Union of Soviet Writers, acting in coordination or consultation with the Committee on Arts Affairs, issued contracts for educational books on approved themes: this was one of them. Katayev, a gifted writer, completed his presumed assignment with flair. Drawing inspiration from his literary idols (Bunin and Gogol), he infused *I Am a Son of the Working People* with arcane jargon, lavish landscape images, rustic humor, an apocalyptic dream scene, and an episode of grief-based madness. His symbolism, like his use of allegory, is intentionally clichéd. In chapter 5, for example, Semyon lifts up a millstone by his mother’s hut and peers at the insect life beneath it. “Although spring had arrived,” Katayev narrates, “the millstone was still ice-bound in the earth. It became sad and mournful.”³⁶ Any schoolchild of the period would have understood the symbolism: the Revolution lifted the rock off the backs of the people. Had the civil war not been won, the people would have been weighed down again.

To be successful in Moscow and Leningrad, Prokofiev’s new opera, his colleagues advised him, would have to be more accessible than his old ones. Upon outlining his intended “plan” for the score to Afinogenov, the writer unhappily replied: “But that’s exactly what’s considered to be formalism.”³⁷ Musically, *I Am a Son of the Working People* allowed Prokofiev to express what he called (in a short essay for the program booklet) the “love of the young people,” the “hatred of the representatives of the old world,” pro-Bolshevik pluckiness, and anti-Bolshevik cowardliness.³⁸ The contemporary subject matter presented logistical difficulties for the composer, whose operatic method had a nineteenth-century grand opera pedigree. “For example,”

he remarked, “an aria sung by the chairman of a village Soviet could, with the slightest awkwardness on the part of the composer, be extremely puzzling to the listener. The recitative of a commissar making a telephone call may also seem strange.” Prokofiev asserted, however, that Katayev’s writing style eased these problems. The characters spoke like “flesh-and-blood” people, and the novella’s symmetrical dialogues facilitated a hybridization of strophic and through-composed vocal forms.³⁹ Prokofiev acknowledged that his music was eclectic, contrasting ritual choral singing with propulsive, ostinato-driven declamation.⁴⁰ He asked listeners to “exert a little effort” to grasp the opera, in which he had tried to capture the true-to-life personalities of Katayev’s characters, who “rejoice,” “grieve,” and “laugh” just like all people do.

Ultimately, Prokofiev’s attraction to *I Am a Son of the Working People* had less to do with the novella’s fictional paeans to peace, land, and bread than with real-world politics. Prokofiev needed to demonstrate his commitment to Socialist Realism, as did the intended director of the opera, Meyerhold, who was in serious trouble. In 1937, the director became a victim of the anti-modernist, anti-formalist campaign mounted by the Committee on Arts Affairs. His theater was liquidated on January 8, 1938, an event Meyerhold attributed to Kerzhentsev’s machinations against him.⁴¹

In 1938, the director girded himself for arrest, but he did not think that the order would come from the top. In the illogic of the times, this belief offered solace. As Ehrenburg recalled: “We thought (probably because we needed to think) that Stalin was unaware of the senseless reprisals against the Communists and the Soviet intelligentsia.” Vsevolod Emilyevich [Meyerhold] said: “Things are being concealed from Stalin.”⁴² Moscow was a vortex of lethal intrigue, but Meyerhold knew that there was no alternative but to continue to work. Deeply worried about Meyerhold’s situation, his former teacher Konstantin Stanislavsky offered him a position, inviting him to become the creative director of his Opera Studio (henceforth the Stanislavsky Theater).

Stanislavsky unexpectedly died on August 7. Meyerhold heard the news as he was leaving for Moscow from the North Caucasus resort of Kislovodsk, a summer retreat of the Soviet artistic elite, and his stay at the resort overlapped with that of Prokofiev. Upon taking charge of the Stanislavsky Theater, Meyerhold beseeched Prokofiev to allow him to stage *Semyon Kotko* (the eventual title of the operatic version of *I Am a Son of the Working People*). Its subject matter was unassailable, and Meyerhold hoped that it

would offer political cover. Katayev recalled the director becoming ever more “alarmed and agitated” as time passed. He “rushed Prokofiev, and wanted to mount the opera quickly, to get things done, and reach some sort of firm commitment as soon as possible.”⁴³

Prokofiev doubtless absorbed Meyerhold’s anxieties and must have ruminated on the loss of some of his own creative and personal freedoms. For a person who took pride in mental toughness, the prospect of losing self-confidence was no less alarming than a summons from the NKVD. Prokofiev, to quote a leading Slavacist, eventually found himself in the paradoxical position of trusting “neither the inner rules that governed [his] own creative imagination, nor the outer rules that governed the society of which [he was] a part”—a situation that posed the threat of creative paralysis.⁴⁴

Semyon Kotko came in for orchestrated criticism following its June 23, 1940, premiere. Long before then, however, the composer realized that the opera would not be the triumph he had trusted it would be. Kerzhentsev had been replaced as chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs by Aleksey Nazarov, who was in turn quickly replaced by Mikhaíl Khrapchenko.⁴⁵ Prokofiev and Meyerhold hoped that the tumult would result in a liberalization of artistic doctrine, but this hope was violently dashed.

Katayev

On Meyerhold’s urging, Prokofiev awarded *Semyon Kotko* to the Stanislavsky Theater without a written contract. Intense labor on the project began in the early spring of 1939. The director worked in close quarters with the composer, but also consulted with the Ukrainian-born set designer Aleksandr Tishler. Tishler, who created dozens of sketches for the opera, encouraged Meyerhold to make the hero look like Saint Sebastian, a Roman martyr known as the protector against plagues.⁴⁶ The director conceived the spectacle as a collection of “fragmentary” vignettes, but Tishler demurred on the grounds that the plotline was “monumental and integrated.”⁴⁷ The two of them agreed in the end on a more stylized, abstract approach.

Putting aside other projects, Prokofiev composed the first three acts of the opera in haste, completing the piano score at a Chaikovskian clip of fifty-three days. He introduced the music to his colleagues on a tentative, scene-by-scene basis. On April 8, 1939, he played through acts 1 and

2 at a small gathering that included Meyerhold, Myaskovsky, and some Stanislavsky Theater personnel. Prokofiev admitted that he was too nervous at the time to present it to a larger audience. He read through the libretto of act 3, the heart and soul of the drama, and talked about the contents of acts 4 and 5.⁴⁸ Myaskovsky voiced approval to Meyerhold but, in his diary, expressed a prescient concern: "The other day I heard two acts of Prokofiev's opera *Semyon Kotko*: it is vibrant, piquant, and evocative, but as always, there are no set pieces."⁴⁹ Myaskovsky would eventually, however, recommend the opera for a Stalin Prize. His nomination letter, dated September 27, 1940, stressed the "deeply realistic" content of the score and the prevalence "from start to finish" of the "intonations of Russian and Ukrainian folksong."⁵⁰

The absence of set pieces became a source of tension between Katayev and Prokofiev, one that lasted through the official run-throughs of the first three acts on June 2 and July 8, 1939. Prokofiev refused to convert the source text into a song-and-dance-filled spectacle: the opera would not, after all, feature Gloria Swanson in a lead role. Like his earlier operas, *Semyon Kotko* was to be largely arioso- and recitative-based, with the vocal lines governed in part by the accent and stress patterns of the Russian language. The technique, which has Musorgskian and Dargomīzhskian precedents, inspired Prokofiev to come up with novel ways of structuring the opera.⁵¹ The Soviet musicologist Marina Sabinina, who wrote an extremely positive book on *Semyon Kotko* (she was appalled by the negative reception accorded the opera at the time of its premiere), comments that the visual action is often structured by the repetition of a single word or phrase. In act 1, scene 2, for example, a brief motive taken from the word *vzaimno* (likewise) provides a scaffold for a dialogue between Semyon, his little sister Frosya, and a group of inquisitive villagers. Sabinina notes that the scene assumes a rondo-like form, with *vzaimno* punctuating three separate exchanges. She charts the scene roughly as follows:

- A: "vzaimno" (three old women and a villager)
- B: two old men
- A: "vzaimno" (Semyon)
- C: three old women, Frosya, the villager, Semyon, two old men
- A: "vzaimno" (Semyon)
- D: three old women (outer sections) and Semyon (inner sections)
- A: "vzaimno" (Semyon)⁵²

Given the emphasis on *arioso*, Prokofiev planned to include just a handful of songs and choruses in *Semyon Kotko*, and each of these would be performed self-consciously by the characters. The singing, in other words, would be “diegetic”⁵³—or, to use Carolyn Abbate’s well-known term, “phenomenal”—emanating from the visual story space.⁵⁴ The characters would hear the singing and perceive it as realistic, emblematic of their harmonious Ukrainian existence.

Katayev was unhappy with this approach. He wanted Prokofiev to create a Soviet version of *La Traviata*—or at least a spectacle that would attain the level of success accorded *The Quiet Don*, a naively tuneful 1935 opera by Ivan Dzerzhinsky that famously received (if one is to believe the TASS account) qualified praise from Stalin.⁵⁵ Prokofiev found himself in the peculiar position of having to encourage the writer to stay true to his own prose style when fashioning the libretto. Katayev wanted to convert his evocative paragraphs into verse; Prokofiev hoped he would leave them intact. The writer described the tug-of-war between them to his biographer as follows:

I worked on the libretto at the dacha, on the Klyazma [River], at a stressful pace. Prokofiev was extremely pedantic when working. He continually rushed me. When an act or scene needed to be written, he would impatiently demand: “Come on, what’s wrong with you? You’ll be the death of me.” He collected it, judged it adequate, and went back to Moscow.

I wrote the libretto in prose, for he would not have it any other way. “No, I don’t want any of this, no verses of any sort.” He himself supplied the plan for several scenes in accord with their musical conception. The use of counterpoint was interesting. In one act [II] he had two scenes in tandem, one on the right, one on the left. “I’m doing this for purposes of thematic development,” he explained.⁵⁶

Katayev paints himself as the victim of the impatient composer, but he had certain ideas of his own about the opera and a strong sense of his value to the project. He esteemed Prokofiev’s talent, listening to his music “indulgently and contentedly” and describing him to his colleague Margarita Aliger as “our composer—a successful acquisition.”⁵⁷ At the same time, Katayev resisted Prokofiev’s operatic aesthetic and the effect it had on the libretto,

which he considered to be his own exclusive domain. The writer likewise felt that he should be given full credit, and full payment, for the libretto.⁵⁸ Prokofiev ceded to the second request, but not to the first. There were too many “propagandisms” (*agitki*) in the text, he acerbically remarked to his friend Alpers, and these “quickly go out of fashion.”⁵⁹

In the end, a truce of sorts was reached between the two artists. Katayev begrudgingly accepted Prokofiev's changes to the libretto, and Prokofiev begrudgingly agreed to include lyrical numbers in the score, thus launching a preemptive strike against his critics in the cultural agencies. In accordance with the socialist realist principle of *narodnost'*, Prokofiev likewise saturated the score with the intonations of Ukrainian folksong, though he avoided actual folksong quotation. (The score contains just one such quotation: in act 1, scene 2, Frosya sings a song about her desires for romance to the tune of “Oh, don't frighten my timid little heart” [Oy, ne puyay, pugachen'ku], a tune also used by Chaikovsky in an opera.⁶⁰ Beyond this, the only other identified borrowing comes in act 2, when Tkachenko mockingly sings a fragment of “God Save the Tsar” [Bozhe, tsarya khрани], the Russian national anthem before the abdication of Nikolay II in February 1917, in anticipation of marrying off his daughter to a German invader.)⁶¹ Upon consulting a published collection of Ukrainian folksongs, Prokofiev created a cluster of folklike melodies.⁶² In a manner partially inspired by his Ballets Russes antipode Stravinsky, Prokofiev abstracted and stylized authentic folksong, a practice that allowed him to elevate his opera from a provincial, realistic plane to a universal, spiritual plane. The story of a mud-stained soldier treading home from the front becomes an allegory for the entire Soviet experience. Thus, on one level, the folklike music represents plain-spoken Ukrainians who have their hearts and minds in the right place. On another level, it offers political tutelage. Within this beautiful, alluring score, the voice of ideology—the voice of Prokofiev's musical narrator—is ever-present.

The folklike melodies are subject to development and modulation, and thus propel the action forward in a manner that actual folksong quotations could not. Prokofiev also connects his folklike music to individual leitmotifs. The giddy strains of the act 2 matchmaker chorus, for example, infuse Sofya's and her mother Khivrya's vocal lines.⁶³ In the middle of the opera, the army cadet Mikola sings the invented folksong “At the crack of dawn” (Rano-ranen'ko) while strumming on a guitar. (The text of the folksong comes from Katayev's novella.) The melody has been heard before, in the

orchestral introduction to the opera, where it functions as a symbol of the Ukrainian homeland. It also appears in the betrothal chorus of act 2 and in the nocturne of act 3. Prokofiev extends Mikola's variant of this invented folksong to accommodate the chromatic line associated with Tkachenko's evil sidekick Klembovsky. The musical message is simple: the anti-Soviet villains are about to shatter the pro-Soviet peace of the village. At this point, however, Mikola has no clue as to Klembovsky's nasty plans; the grim warning is intended for the audience alone. Here Prokofiev's alteration of the folksong operates as a kind of musical double exposure: on the one hand, Mikola is singing; on the other hand, an invisible narrator is communicating through his voice.

Such inserted musical comments remind the listener of the controlling force at the heart of the work. The characters are cardboard cutouts, with preassigned roles—teacher and student, aggressor and defender—that derive from a Marxist-Leninist template. Their personalities devolve rather than evolve; over the course of the opera, they shed their individualities to become part of a like-minded collective. During the act 4 “artillery lesson” episode, for example, a jocular tune sung by Semyon is constantly bounced back to him by his comrades.

In act 5, Prokofiev elected to enhance further the political message of the opera. He once again reprised the invented folksong “At the crack of dawn,” this time assigning it to a chorus of villagers and infusing it with march-like strains. The chorus celebrates the ragtag partisans' triumph over the Germans, even though, according to the plot, that victory is still some time away. In historical terms, the opera ends too soon. But the ideological principles at its core suggest a transformation of time. The ending completes a progression from nature (as thesis) to the people (as antithesis) to the Soviet national ideal (as synthesis). The transpositions of “At the crack of dawn” trace this tripartite movement.

Because Marxist-Leninist dialectics predetermines who will win and who will lose, the opposition between hero and villain in the score is artificial, since the future triumph of the Soviet system is assured. Prokofiev assigns the “good” characters in *Semyon Kotko* more melodies than the “bad” ones. Recitative-like passages dominate the opera such that singing stands out to denote exclusive pureness of spirit. To signal that the victory of the Ukrainian villagers over their German, kulak, and counterrevolutionary foes is assured, he subjected the music of the positive characters to heroic development and the music of the negative ones to hapless caricature.

In the instrumental preludes and postludes, however, harmonic and melodic repetition substitutes for conflict. The score's semantic sameness puzzled Sabinina, who felt that the pro-Soviet and anti-Soviet characters sounded too much alike. For instance, just before the episode in which Tkachenko hears of his daughter's plans to wed Semyon and settle down on a farm, the orchestra intones Tkachenko's first theme. Instead of the dissonant march-like music assigned to the other villains, however, one hears a variation of the tune used to represent the title's character's homecoming. The open fifths, doubled octaves, and descending eighth-note pattern all recall Semyon's "theme of return." The similarity obliges Sabinina to describe Tkachenko's music as untypical of the conventions in Soviet opera for representing negative characters. Tkachenko's second theme is also problematic, in her view, because it "even more clearly demonstrates a connection to song, specifically Ukrainian folksong. Curiously, it first appears just when he reveals himself to be a deceitful informer, treacherous and cruel."⁶⁴

The soldier-farmer Semyon and the landowner Tkachenko fulfill the duties assigned to them by ideology: the former directs the "movement to the Purpose"; the latter seeks to "hinder" this movement.⁶⁵ Prokofiev may or may not have held Socialist Realism in contempt, but his opera adheres to its guidelines. Present-day listeners may find—or may wish to find—irony in the two-dimensionality of the dramatic situations. These do not, however, reflect a desire on the part of the composer to be subversive; rather, they attest to the earnestness of his intentions. Prokofiev hoped to create a Soviet operatic classic, one that would rescue Soviet music from its decline into RAPMist dilettantism. Meyerhold, for his part, aspired to engineer a successful premiere of this obedient work and thus extricate himself from peril.

Meyerhold's Arrest

Tragically, he did not get the chance. On June 20, 1939, Meyerhold was arrested and, after seven months of torture in prison, executed. The director was detained in Leningrad, where he had traveled with Tishler, his set designer, to finalize details for an agitprop athletic spectacle organized by the Kremlin.⁶⁶ This was one of many such spectacles held in Soviet cities that summer as part of a campaign to increase the physical stamina of the adolescent population, the future conscripts of the ever-expanding Red Army. Wearing identical uniforms and moving in unison, male and female "physical culturists" performed paramilitary exercises and executed hypothetical battlefield maneuvers.

The Leningrad Institute of Physical Culture summoned Meyerhold to serve as the choreographer for a July 6 spectacle involving 30,000 athletes. These athletes were but one component of a massive “All-Union” spectacle planned for July 18 and 20 in Moscow. (The July 18 performance was scheduled for Red Square; the July 20 performance for the Dynamo soccer stadium.) Meyerhold approached this very public task with tremendous seriousness and, to enrich the content of the spectacle, requested that Prokofiev be commissioned to write music for it. The composer scrambled over the course of a week (May 23–29) to provide six numbers for the “Gymnastic Exercises,” which constituted just one part of the day-long event but bore their own narrative structure: “Introduction,” “Apparatuses,” “Free Exercises,” “Obstacle Course,” “Battle,” and “Concluding Appearance of all Participants.” The six numbers contain various cues indicating the types of activities they would accompany: “Work in unison,” “work in ensembles,” “pole jump,” “long-distance jump,” “start of the battle,” “hand-to-hand battle,” and so forth. Prokofiev’s handwritten notes on the scenario provide insight into his time-saving creative methods, while also suggesting that he made no essential distinction between composing for pole-vaulters and floor-mat wrestlers and composing for ballet dancers. Chaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty* and his own *Romeo and Juliet* served as fodder for the score. In the margins of the scenario for the apparatuses, for example, one reads:

Waltz. 1 measure per second. 3/4. With the composure of circus acrobats. Like Chaikovsky’s *Sleeping Beauty*, but with champagne.⁶⁷

In a separate, lengthier note, he clarified these points:

The apparatuses are brought in to the preceding [musical material]. Three chords at the start; the melody begins from the fourth. *Sleeping Beauty* waltz but merrier (more like Strauss). 3 minutes with possible extension to 3 1/2. 20-second coda. They come down at the end. 16 measures 16–20 seconds.⁶⁸

In the margins of the scenario for the obstacle course Prokofiev noted that “40 seconds” of music would recall the music for Romeo’s confidant

"Mercutio, but a little slower and not too impetuous."⁶⁹ For this project, Prokofiev thought primarily in metric schemes.

The music for the gymnastic exercises is a comparatively insignificant part of Prokofiev's oeuvre, but it was intended for a high-profile event and came with a generous commission. For seven days of work, he received 10,000 rubles, an amount that rivals the sums he earned for his film scores. He did not have to worry about hiring Lamm to handle the orchestration, because the task has already been farmed out to Zinoviy Feldman. Feldman had worked for Prokofiev once before, orchestrating the pomp-filled march he had composed in 1935 for the national games of the Soviet Union. (These games, known as the Soviet Spartakiade, were held every four years as a surrogate of the Olympic Games, which the Soviet Union did not join until 1952.) Feldman trembled at the thought of orchestrating the gymnastic exercises, however, and connived to break his contract, at which point Prokofiev tore into him, accusing him of acting like a "little child" and reminding him, in a fashion that could only have added to Feldman's stress, that "the entire government" was awaiting the spectacle.⁷⁰ Under great pressure, the two of them worked out a deal whereby Feldman would orchestrate the bulk of the music, with another composer handling the rest.

The Stalinist regime organized physical culture spectacles for didactic purposes; in this respect the spectacles were no different from the constant, droning speeches that filled the airwaves. By 1939, the public was accustomed to attending such mass rites, which, according to the official press, were greeted with enthusiasm and excitement. The freckle-faced participants beamed with joy, the clouds parted as they went into their routines, and the people in the stands marveled at the agility and strength of Soviet youth. Even Prokofiev was (or pretended to be) entranced: at the 1935 Spartakiade, he became totally "immersed" and was "joyfully smiling and happy."⁷¹ This description comes from the musicologist Grigoriy Shneyerson, who also claimed that Prokofiev's fascination with the games was such that he seemed unaware of the sound of his own music. Whatever the composer's interest in the 1935 Spartakiade, it must have been greater than his enthusiasm for the 1939 spectacle. No sooner had he drafted the music for the latter event than he turned his back on the score, trusting that Meyerhold would transform his labor into something impressive.

Meyerhold traveled to Leningrad in mid-June to coordinate the sounds and sights of the spectacle. And then he disappeared. Tishler recalls taking

a stroll with him in the Botanical Garden on June 19; they arranged to meet again the next morning, but by then the director was gone:

I returned to Moscow alone. The wall-newspaper hanging in the hallway of the [Stanislavsky] theater had photographs of Prokofiev, the conductor Zhukov, and me. Meyerhold's photograph was no longer there; it had been cut out. *Semyon Kotko* was staged by another director and, of course, in a different way.⁷²

The official NKVD records of Meyerhold's arrest, like those of other victims of the purges, are stored in Moscow at the central archive of the Federal Security Bureau. Eighteen documents from the director's file have been published to date, and they provide harrowing and heartbreaking insight into NKVD tactics.⁷³ Following his transfer to the Butir'skaya Prison in Moscow, the director was questioned eleven times under unimaginable physical duress. (The first interrogation came on July 8, the last on November 9.) Prior to his execution by firing squad on February 1, 1940, he was beaten into signing a confession for espionage. He was then found guilty of conspiring against the Stalinist regime by following the teachings of the outlaw revolutionary Leon Trotsky, an "enemy of the people" who had fled the Soviet Union for Mexico. He, too, would soon be murdered.

Excluding a couple of passing mentions, Prokofiev left no record of his reaction to Meyerhold's disappearance. In the wake of the event, he tightly clung to his habits, continuing to compose, continuing to perform, and continuing to express his disdain for bureaucrats like the recently deposed Kerzhentsev. The fiasco of the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October* eighteen months before had convinced him that the chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs exacted revenge on those who did not follow his orders; it did not convince him, however, that he was, like Meyerhold, in harm's way.⁷⁴

His wife, in contrast, became ever more fearful. On July 16, 1939, Lina learned that Zinaida Raykh, Meyerhold's wife and lead actress, had been gruesomely murdered. Lina had gone to the Stanislavsky Theater to collect her husband's advance for *Semyon Kotko*. The director of the theater, Zinoviy Daltsev, broke the news to her. "It seems," she wrote to her husband, "that the day before yesterday thieves broke into Z. Raykh's flat, first bludgeoned her housekeeper and then stabbed her twelve times. She died in

the hospital an hour and a half later—what a drama!” Lina’s distress was palpable: “I still can’t get my head around this,” she ended.⁷⁵ Nor could Prokofiev: “What horror about Zinaida!” he exclaimed in his July 19 reply, “Poor V. E. [Meyerhold]!”⁷⁶

Lina’s letter reached Prokofiev in Kislovodsk. Earlier, Lina had asked Daltsev if he could arrange for her to stay with her husband at the resort, but the director did not come through for her. The government mandated that vacations be distributed to individuals, not to their families, based on rank and merit. The needs of families came second to the needs of the regime; as a consequence, families broke apart. Lina remained in Moscow while Prokofiev lived in one of the rooms allotted to the Stanislavsky Theater collective, immersed in acts 4 and 5 of *Semyon Kotko*. Once he had patched together the simple final chorus of the opera he began the orchestration of the whole, completing the scoring of acts 1 and 2 on July 26, acts 3 and 4 on August 29, and act 5 on September 10—by which time he had left Kislovodsk, which had had a damp, cold summer, for warmer Sochi.⁷⁷ He intermittently met about the opera with Serafima Birman, an actress-turned-director chosen by Daltsev as Meyerhold’s substitute, largely because she and Prokofiev were living alongside each other in Kislovodsk.

Although Prokofiev desperately wanted *Semyon Kotko* to be performed, he did not want to collaborate with Birman. He hoped instead to enlist Eisenstein as the director, but the filmmaker was occupied at the time with a project about the construction of the Fergana Canal in Uzbekistan, which was intended to facilitate cotton farming. Thus, before Prokofiev could invite Eisenstein to take the reins of the tainted opera, Eisenstein contacted him with a proposal to write the music for the film. Prokofiev seemed content to decline the request, since it would have meant creating background scoring for the encroachment of “threatening” sands on “a city parched to death”; it would have also meant reworking authentic Uzbek dances, the purpose being to narrate the transformation of the canal’s heroic builders from desert nomads into industrial designers. In his reply to Eisenstein, Prokofiev dispassionately and somewhat opportunistically touched on Meyerhold’s arrest: “Incidentally, after the catastrophe with M[eyerhold], who was to have staged my opera, my first impulse was to throw myself at your feet and implore you to take on the staging.” This “dream” was scuttled when he learned that Eisenstein had taken on the Fergana Canal project.⁷⁸

Evidence indicates that Birman, an untested director, had trepidations about *Semyon Kotko*; perhaps Eisenstein did as well. No sooner had Birman

promised to stage the opera than she reneged. Daltsev needed to pester her from far-distant Moscow to sign her contract and expressed “bewilderment” at her tardiness. “I am unwilling to entertain the thought that you might decline [the offer],” he admonished her on July 14. “I recall your categorical promise to take on the staging of S. S. Prokofiev’s opera. Believe me, Serafima Germanovna, you are assuming a very rewarding and noble task.”⁷⁹ Further pressure came from Viktor Gorodinsky, editor-in-chief of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* and former music advisor for the Central Committee, who told Daltsev that he would do “whatever it takes” to convince Birman to sign the contract.⁸⁰

Daltsev reminded Birman of the favorable run-through of sections of acts 1–3 of *Semyon Kotko* at the Stanislavsky Theater on July 8.⁸¹ The event was a lovefest, with the invited audience—which included Gorodinsky, the composers Lev Knipper, Georgiy Kreytner, and Gavriil Popov, the editors of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, the conductor Mikhail Zhukov, and some of the singers and musicians in the theater’s employ—heaping praise on every detail of the score. Popov enthused that “act III was so captivating, that I don’t have the words to express my feelings of delight,” and Kreytner effused that acts 1 and 2 “marked a step forward in the creation of a classic Soviet opera.” The group from *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* noted with approval the relationship between Prokofiev’s and Musorgsky’s text-setting practices, though one member noted that the folksy libretto less recalled Gogol than “thieves’ cant”—the implication being that, for all of the score’s exalted lyricism, debased creatures like Sofya’s mother, Khivrya, are kept down in the gutter. The audience at the run-through backed the choice of Birman as director. Despite the brevity of her résumé, she had apparently demonstrated “profound originality and talent” in her work.

Prokofiev did not see it that way. His meetings with Birman, like his meetings with Katayev, left him gnashing his teeth. Numerous arguments arose. In a brief reminiscence, Birman acknowledged that the collaboration was anguished, with the inscrutable composer demanding the realization of Meyerhold’s opaque vision of the opera, which she wanted to cast as a satire of the kulak class, freighted with symbolism about liberation from oppression.⁸² (She took as inspiration the acclaimed 1898 production of Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull* at the Moscow Arts Theater.) Tishler, meantime, grumbled to Prokofiev that Birman lacked an understanding of his art and that he could not accommodate her requests. The singers, moreover, soon “tired of Birman’s long-winded discussions and explanations.” It was

a miserable situation, with the three principals having different agendas and yanked in different directions, like “the swan, the crab, and the pike” in Ivan Krilov’s eponymous nineteenth-century fable.⁸³ Birman tried to put a brave face on it, but she could not help but notice that Prokofiev disliked her:

It’s a great pity that I decided only in very rare instances to approach Prokofiev with a question about what he wanted the orchestra to express in this or that fragment of the opera.

“Sergey Sergeyevich, what’s going in the orchestra when the enemies ambush the village?” “Bones. Don’t you understand? Bones, I’m saying. Skeletons...” He did not explain further: if you got it, good, if not, blame yourself.

But he could be fearsome, even rude. Once we were rehearsing a very difficult scene whose contents I don’t precisely recall. We had to repeat the very same passage over and over again. The actors got distracted; my energy waned. Suddenly Prokofiev’s angry voice emanated from the darkness of the hall: “Cadence! Cadence! It’s imprecise!” I burst out: “Sergey Sergeyevich! I can’t go on tormenting the actors.” “Your work is careless!”⁸⁴

Their one cordial meeting was their first, but even it had a black comic dimension. Birman recalls Prokofiev visiting her room at the Kislovodsk resort to introduce her to the opera. He had just completed a tennis match and felt energized. There was no piano in the room; undaunted, he pulled a chair up beside the bed, laid his large hands on the duvet, and proceeded to thump through the entire score, singing both the instrumental and vocal parts in his untrained voice. An attendant rapped on the door to report complaints from the neighbors: “Put a stop, please, to this noise and refrain from disturbing the peace.”⁸⁵

The disappearance of Meyerhold, the quarrels with Katayev, and the difficulties with Birman cast a pall over the rehearsals. An unrelated event that no one could have predicted then spoiled the premiere. On August 23, 1939, the Soviet premier and foreign minister Molotov and his German counterpart Joachim von Ribbentrop signed a nonaggression pact and an appended secret protocol that were supposed to define the Soviet and German spheres of influence for the next ten years.⁸⁶ Poland, the three

Baltic States, and the enclave of Bessarabia were suddenly left open to the depredations of either or both powers. The pact permitted Hitler to attack Poland a week later without fear of reprisal from Stalin. It remained in effect until June 22, 1941, when Hitler launched a three-pronged attack on the Soviet Union.

In the two years of the pact's existence, the Committee on Arts Affairs curtailed the commissioning and distributing of anti-German art. *Semyon Kotko*, like *Alexander Nevsky*, suddenly became politically incorrect. "There was a pause," Katayev recalls, and then some "diplomatic nastiness."⁸⁷ Marina Nestyeva claims that "a representative from the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs demanded that appropriate changes be made to the opera's text: 'The accent must be placed solely on the intervention. Europe is looking at you and your words, Sergey Sergeyevich.'" The composer bristled: "'I won't change anything in the music. So let Europe look at the comrade from the NKID.'"⁸⁸ The anecdote dates from April 17, 1940, nine days before the scheduled premiere of *Semyon Kotko*. It suggests that Prokofiev resisted bureaucratic intimidation even in the wake of Meyerhold's disappearance; as such, it is likely embellished. The "comrade from the NKID" was Vladimir Dekanozov, Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister (People's Commissar), about to be named Soviet ambassador to Nazi Germany.

The controversy led to a rescheduling of the premiere of *Semyon Kotko* from April 26 to June 23, the end of the 1939–40 season.⁸⁹ On June 1, Prokofiev wrote to Molotov in an effort to prevent an indefinite postponement:

Highly esteemed Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich: You have paid great attention to my opera *SK*, showing interest in its fate. The presence in it of several foreign elements has elicited various reactions: as far as I know, comrades Lozovsky and Shcheglov find nothing wrong with it; comrade Dekanozov, on the other hand, considers it undesirable.... I know, Vyacheslav Mikhaylovich, that you attend many opera productions. Might I request that you schedule a closed review and attend it so as to be certain for yourself that there is nothing in it that might shock our neighbors? Reports by your colleagues and a reading of the libretto cannot provide an accurate perception of my conception, and the work might perish owing to an unclear perception of it.⁹⁰

Molotov referred the matter to Khrapchenko and Andrey Vishinsky, the Deputy Premier and the prosecutor of the 1936–38 show trials, jotting “What will it be?” on the June 8 letter. Vishinsky jotted below: “Review scheduled for 11/VI at 11 a.m.”

Two days later, on June 13, Vishinsky informed Molotov that he had attended the review of *Semyon Kotko* with a lower-level official from the NKID press office and Khrapchenko. “I consider it prudent to make changes to the libretto, eliminating the episodes with the Austrian-German occupants,” he stated. “S. S. Prokofiev agrees with these suggestions. The issue can therefore be considered resolved.”⁹¹

The music of the opera remained the same, but the music was not in dispute, and Prokofiev, indignation notwithstanding, knew it. Since the libretto included a few German-language expressions, he and Katayev had at first simply decided to transform the villains from Germans into Austrians. This change obviously did not placate Vishinsky. So the Austrians were transformed into *haydamaks* (Ukrainian nationalists), with some louts from the old imperial army thrown into the mix. Even Prokofiev’s sons took part in the bizarre sequence of events: Oleg recalled playing dress-up—first as Germans, then as haydamaks—in the family apartment.⁹²

Semyon Kotko received its June 23 premiere and held a spot in the Stanislavsky Theater repertoire during the 1940–41 season. It closed on February 2, 1941, after fifteen performances, including a radio broadcast of a montage from the score on December 21, 1940. Another such broadcast was heard on American radio on November 3, 1940, with Prokofiev offering remarks in English. During the season, excerpts from the first and second acts were performed as part of concerts at Moscow academies, institutes, and factories.⁹³ The fraught politics of *Semyon Kotko* made it unpalatable for most reviewers, who compared it unfavorably to the aria-and-chorus-filled opera *Into the Storm*, which was premiered on October 10, 1939, at the Nemirovich-Danchenko Music Theater.⁹⁴ That opera was written by a greenhorn composer from the provinces named Tikhon Khrennikov, who would make the right political moves to assume the leadership of the Union of Soviet Composers in 1948. Much like *Semyon Kotko*, *Into the Storm* narrates a struggle between pro- and anti-revolutionaries for control of a remote village. Unlike *Semyon Kotko*, it introduced, for the first time in Soviet opera, the character of Lenin, who, as a mark of transcendent otherness, speaks rather than sings. The two operas were compared in successive issues of the journal *Sovetskaya muzika* and at meetings of the Moscow

branch of the Union of Soviet Composers on November 27 and 29, 1939. Khrennikov asserts that his opera received the most attention, but that its assessors fell into two irreconcilable camps:⁹⁵

The head of the first was the musicologist Semyon Shlifshteyn, the head of the second was the musicologist Georgiy Khubov (and each had his own “train” of people with like-minded views). For Shlifshteyn’s lecture, which included a furious attack on my opera, I naturally asked to sing and play all of the musical examples myself. The situation became amusing (though at the time it did not seem amusing at all). The lecturer tore into me. “Listen to the crudeness here,” he said. “Tikhon Nikolayevich, please demonstrate.” And I obediently played the requested episode, compiling my own “dossier” of compromising sounds.⁹⁶

Unlike Khrennikov, Prokofiev could not be accused of crudeness. Detractors of *Semyon Kotko* instead charged him with arrogantly disgracing the memories of Ukrainian revolutionaries by presenting them in a comic guise in the act 4 artillery scene. As Khrennikov recalls one critic remarking, “The partisans in this scene emit ‘inarticulate sounds’ and recall the grotesque figure of the lackey Stepan in Musorgsky’s *Marriage*.”⁹⁷ And although Prokofiev strove for tunefulness throughout his opera, he had not, according to a second critic, sacrificed his commitment to continuous declamation, the result being an uneven score:

A contradiction arises between the aspiration to saturate the opera with *melos* and the aspiration to avoid cutting the musical-dramatic fabric into parts. As a result, despite an abundance of vocal lines of high melodic quality, the opera conveys an episodic, no-more-than-a-sum-of-its-parts impression. The impression of melodiousness would have been greater had Prokofiev not followed the irritating (to the listener) practice of more often than not assigning the singer mere “extensions” of the orchestral melodies (or partial themes, conveyed intact only in the orchestra). Several melodic episodes are not perceived as such by the listener, since they are heard at the same time as a recitative

or even the rhythmicized conversation of the other characters. Finally, the general melodic plan of the opera creates a negative effect. Nearly half of the melodic ideas in the opera are concentrated in act 1; in the remaining acts new themes are introduced all the more sparingly.⁹⁸

This critique is heavy-handed, an effort to isolate musical faults in a score that Khrennikov, among others, privately deemed “brilliant” and “perhaps the best of those [operas] written by Soviet composers on a Soviet theme.”⁹⁹ Even as the opera was pulled from the repertoire, it continued to gain defenders. In mid-January 1943, Prokofiev entertained an offer to revive *Semyon Kotko*—once certain large-scale changes in the dramatic structure were made—but the plan fell through.

The Ballet Revised

As *Semyon Kotko* was being conceived, composed, and produced, work continued behind the scenes on the much-delayed Leningrad premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*. The ballet had a successful Czechoslovakian premiere at the end of 1938, but suffered considerable vandalizing before it reached the Soviet stage. On August 28, 1938, just before the Brno Opera House started to rehearse the ballet, Prokofiev received a telegram from the Kirov Theater expressing interest in adding it to the 1939–40 season. The Leningrad production, choreographed by Leonid Lavrovsky and conducted by Isay Sherman, involved changes to the scenario and then the music that Prokofiev largely resisted, but that he did not fully know about until the January 11, 1940, premiere. In effect, the conflict with Katayev and Birman about the dramatic structure of *Semyon Kotko* was reprised in a balletic context. Just as his operatic co-collaborators implored him to traditionalize the opera with tuneful numbers for the hero (Semyon) and heroine (Sofya), his balletic co-collaborators pressured him to traditionalize *Romeo and Juliet* by including bravura variations in the ballroom and balcony scenes.

Prokofiev refused to rework the ballet along these lines, claiming that he and Radlov had worked out the timings of the numbers to the precise second and that he had left the ballet behind him for other projects—but Sherman, acting as Lavrovsky's liaison with the composer in the ten weeks preceding the premiere, cajoled him into changing his mind: “Sergey Sergeyevich, you write cadenzas in your piano concertos—ballet variations are cadenzas, too. Why

deprive the dancers of the opportunity to display their balletic technique?”¹⁰⁰ After mulling the matter over, Prokofiev complied, drafting the requested variations (Nos. 14 and 20 in the score), and submitting them to the Kirov Theater for approval.¹⁰¹ His effort satisfied the choreographer and his dancers only in part. On Lavrovsky’s insistence, Sherman asked the composer to make the ending of Romeo’s variation more emphatic and to eliminate six measures from Juliet’s variation. Once again Prokofiev complied, informing Sherman:

I have shortened Juliet’s Variation in the following way: bars 68–72 without alterations. Then: further on, bar 80, i.e. the one with the four natural signs in the key signature. So, six bars have been removed as [the ballerina Galina] Ulanova requested. As regards Romeo’s variation, nothing can be done there. It was agreed with Lavrovsky that it would end, dying away. Furthermore: the variations lead into other music *without a pause* so that even Romeo won’t be able to milk applause: a hard fate for an ambitious dancer!¹⁰²

Prokofiev’s compromise on the variations did not mark the end of the saga. Lavrovsky convinced the composer to add two blocks of music to act 4 (No. 51) for “Romeo’s exit after the funeral” and “Romeo’s death,” and to add, for purposes of character development, a double reprise of Paris’s theme in act 3 (No. 46).¹⁰³ Prokofiev was then asked to reduce Mercutio’s variation (No. 15) from a three-part (ABA) form to a two-part (AA) one. The composer hesitated, noting (as Rimsky-Korsakov had taught him) that some cuts “lengthen, rather than shorten” a work.¹⁰⁴ He agreed to make the reduction only after seeing the choreography. Lastly, Lavrovsky asked for a group dance to be added to the opening of act 1, which was otherwise dominated by pantomimic scenes. Feeling besieged, Prokofiev refused to do so, but the choreographer did not back down. They quarreled, with Lavrovsky threatening to import the scherzo from Prokofiev’s Second Piano Sonata into the ballet, and Prokofiev angrily forced into cobbling together a new number, the “Morning Dance” (No. 4).¹⁰⁵

Much of the dispute centered on Prokofiev’s disregard of the precepts of grand classical ballet in favor of a Diaghilev-inspired conception of the genre as one in which music and dance are free to set their own narrative agendas, to step out, as it were, from each other’s shadows. *Romeo and Juliet* has a traditional framework, but as Vadim Gayevsky argues, the composer avoided traditional expressive modes. Committed to sober-minded stylization, he

drained emotion from the “ball” and “sleep” scenes and, in the climactic episodes, suppressed “metaphysics,” “conventional motives,” “feeries,” and “nocturnal poetry”:

Prokofiev's ball is not Berlioz's ball, and Juliet's sleep is not Aurora's sleep. It is a real but terrible sleep: it is as lifeless as death. The muffled chords of Prokofiev's music portray in almost palpable fashion the leaden tread, fading pulse, and falling, numbed body. The episode in which Juliet takes poison in order to fall asleep for forty-two hours is, on the level of emotion and orchestration, the least colorful episode of the score. It is as dry as a transcript and as brief as a death notice.¹⁰⁶

The revised (tragic ending) version of *Romeo and Juliet* depicts death, but it does not celebrate it. The death scene denies the potential of reincarnation, transcendence, and—for the living left behind—consolation. Lavrovsky seems to have wanted the ballet to build up through the three acts to a *Liebestod*, with playful numbers from the original 1935 version of the score either rescored or removed. (At some point, he excised the “Dance of the Three Moors” in an effort to make the scenario gloomier.¹⁰⁷) Prokofiev, in contrast, sought to depict the triumph of the spirit in the act 1 scenes of carefree abandon and guileless resistance to familial constraints. Uplifting Apollonian passion is embodied in the melodies of the ballroom, balcony, and morning episodes; the powers of fate govern the phobic ostinato patterns. The clash between the capricious, “neoclassical” Mercutio and hotheaded, “Scythian” Tibald establishes the parameters of the tragic ending.¹⁰⁸

For the dancers, the challenge of the ballet was less aesthetic than practical. The loudest complaint came from Ulanova, to whom Lavrovsky assigned the role of Juliet. She found Prokofiev's rhythmic sequences inscrutable and pestered him to recompose them. Later, she ascribed the trouble to her training. The dancers in the troupe had been schooled in simple counts, not conflicting meters:

To tell the truth we were not accustomed to such music, in fact we were a little afraid of it. It seemed to us that in rehearsing the Adagio from Act I, for example, we were following some melodic pattern of our own, something nearer

to our own conception of how the love of Romeo and Juliet should be expressed than that contained in Prokofiev's "strange" music. For I must confess that we did not hear that love in his music then.¹⁰⁹

While *Romeo and Juliet* was in rehearsal, Prokofiev traveled back and forth from Moscow to Leningrad. He listened to the complaints about the score, ignoring most of them at first, but then, for the sake of the production, responding to them, tweaking rhythmic sequences, cadences, even the instrumentation. Sherman recounts the unusual fashion in which one of these alterations was made:

During a break in one of the rehearsals, after the run-through of the scene in which Juliet takes poison, Ulanova told me that she nearly died of fright during her dance. She related basically the following: "Can you imagine, while dancing I saw Prokofiev in the mirror; startled, I had the fleeting thought: might this be a hallucination?"

It turned out that she had previously complained to Sergey Sergeevich that she could not hear the orchestra during the mirror scene, when [Juliet] decides to take poison. Prokofiev decided to validate the ballerina's complaint. He went onstage and walked behind Ulanova during her entire dance. At the break he silently came down to the orchestra pit, added something to a few instrumental parts, then he silently took the score and added something to it, and only then did he say to me: "The acoustics in the pit are such that not everything can be heard on the stage. See what I have added, without violating my conception...to my credit." So what did he add? In one place he gave the bass clarinet a held note; he added the triangle somewhere, and in two places he added short notes for the flutes and piccolos on strong beats in the measure...and onstage the ballerina heard everything.¹¹⁰

Given this and other adjustments, it is fair to say that the First and Second Suites from *Romeo and Juliet*, which date from 1936, provide a better sense of Prokofiev's intended orchestration of the ballet than the actual score—even though they were assembled for nontheatrical concert performance.

In the run-up to the ballet's Leningrad premiere, Prokofiev discovered that Lavrovsky had altered the music in places without consulting him.¹¹¹ He protested the changes to Sherman, but the conductor—to whom credit goes for shepherding the ballet to the stage—could not convince Lavrovsky to undo them. Prokofiev's final letter to Sherman on the subject shows enormous frustration:

On numerous occasions I have appealed to the Kirov Theater to insert a number of corrections relating to the lack of coordination between the choreography and the music, superfluous repeats, insertions, and so on. For four months nothing has been done and I do not know the state in which the production will reach Moscow. On March 31 I sent a registered letter to the management with an official request for an enquiry into this matter. But the management has simply not answered.¹¹²

Eventually, Prokofiev forgave Sherman and learned to tolerate, if not respect, Lavrovsky. He found it necessary, given all that had happened, to credit the choreographer as co-author of the scenario. The original scenarist Radlov, sidelined during the tortured process of revision, disowned the ballet, purportedly forewarning acquaintances who attended a rehearsal to “bear in mind that I don't take any responsibility for this disgrace.”¹¹³ Despite the alteration of the scenario and score and the fact that it premiered in black-out conditions in Leningrad during the Finnish-Russian War, *Romeo and Juliet* became a success. A March 23, 1940, memorandum from the Committee on Arts Affairs to Sovnarkom finds Stalin approving a performance in Moscow.¹¹⁴ Later productions, including that presented by Lavrovsky in Moscow in 1946, received international notice. The aristocratic décor risked undercutting socialist principles, but it represented something of a diplomatic breakthrough, helping to reestablish cultural relations between Eastern and Western Europe. By 1946, Prokofiev could no longer conceive of traveling abroad; the altered, Stalin-approved version of the ballet went in his stead. His Shakespearean tale of woe came with a bittersweet ending.

Dissent

Such, of course, could not be said of the tale of *Semyon Kotko*. Prokofiev might have been ignorant of the details of Meyerhold's arrest, but he could not have been ignorant of the bureaucratic machinations that attended the

closing of Meyerhold's theater and the gradual curtailment of the director's creative activities. In the fall of 1939, Prokofiev abandoned his fading hopes for a moderation in Soviet cultural policy. Indirect evidence comes from a lecture that he began but did not finish writing, perhaps because it had no chance of being delivered. The outline, which bristles with dissent, dates from November 12:

1. Soviet art, despite its enormous breadth, is declining in quality.
2. Among the arts (in general, not specifically in the USSR), music is the youngest. The process of hearing is refined with each generation and attains the ability to grasp increasingly complicated relationships between pitches. The music of all of the classic composers was not understood on first contact. In contrast, music that is immediately understood does not outlast its generation. Assessments of complexity and falseness are finite, not absolute. Perspective is needed.
3. The masses are developing faster than many composers think. The creation of music for the masses should be like an arrow in flight: moving forward toward its goal.
4. The music of [Isaak] Dunayevsky [an operetta, popular song, and film score composer] and [Dmitriy] Pokrass is based not on true folk music or the classics, but on operetta and cabaret songs. It does not transport the masses, but pushes them backward, schooling them in vulgarity.
5. The music of Dzerzhinsky is illiterate. His development of folksongs represents a decline in comparison to that which occurred seventy years ago. Lesser composers regard Dzherzhinsky's absence of talent as a marker of success.
6. But even more significant composers are in decline. Slogans about innovation and achievement are unconvincing, since even the slightest achievement is hailed. The critics' dangerous point of view: "I didn't understand this the first time—this makes it Formalism."
7. The official directive concerning the struggle against Formalism has been carried out too zealously. The baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. Composers have abandoned the search for new material (because to search for such material is Formalism). Music comprising second-rate material cannot be first-rate.¹¹⁵

Beneath the invective, one notes that while Prokofiev was not averse to composing music for the masses, he was averse to the notion that music should be oriented toward accessibility. The target of his complaint was the troika of cultural policy—Party-mindedness, people-mindedness, and ideological content—which remained, in his opinion, condescending to its intended audience, antithetical to the actual labor of music making.

The candor and the mere fact of the survival of these comments suggest that they were intended for posterity. Henceforth, Prokofiev prudently censored himself; his writings become less individual and more doctrinaire, choked with officialese. He maintained his international reputation, but he abandoned his international perspective. The government hastened this adjustment by refusing his requests to tour abroad.

It took some time before Prokofiev realized that he would no longer benefit from creative dialogue with colleagues and audiences in the West. Throughout 1938, he maintained regular contact with his Paris secretary Astrov, and continued to discuss potential engagements in Europe and the United States with his agent (S. S. Horwitz) and the Haensel & Jones firm. In December 1938, he arranged and, at the last minute, annulled a trip to Paris: “The time is not right,” he wrote to Astrov on the 15th, “we will return to this question in a month.”¹¹⁶

After scheduling the Paris performances, Prokofiev and his agent planned an entire month of events in the United States, including a week in February conducting the New York Philharmonic. Prokofiev proposed introducing his *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata (a noncinematic arrangement of his film score) to New York audiences. Irrespective of the work’s xenophobic patriotic nationalism, he believed that it would have as large a success abroad as it did at home. Plans for the tour grew over time, with events on the East Coast, West Coast (the fascination with Hollywood had not decreased), and Chicago planned for February and March. Besides the *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata (which calls for eighty to one hundred singers), Prokofiev planned to conduct the *Love for Three Oranges* Suite, *Peter and the Wolf*, and the Second Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*. As in 1938, he would also perform his First Piano Concerto. The proposed tour received advance coverage in the *New York Times*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times*. This last newspaper even reported that Prokofiev had “taken a house for several weeks” in Los Angeles in the spring of 1939 for the purposes of composing a film score.¹¹⁷

On February 9, 1939, Prokofiev informed Koussevitzky’s assistant Nicolas Slonimsky that he had “expected to come to the States around this

time,” but that his engagements had been “postponed until next season.”¹¹⁸ The postponement became permanent as creative, personal, and political pressures mounted. Prokofiev wrote again to Astrov in June in hopes of arranging another tour to Paris, this time in January 1940, but he cautioned that the trip might have to be rescheduled on account of *Semyon Kotko*. The Stanislavsky Theater was planning a December 1939 premiere of the opera, but as Prokofiev pointed out—this time to Horwitz—“all premieres are susceptible to delay.”¹¹⁹ The composer could not have anticipated that he, Katayev, and Tishler would be forced to rework the opera, and that the delay would last for over half a year.

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Two days later Western Europe exploded into conflict, with Great Britain and France entering full-scale battle against Hitler. Prokofiev expressed his fears about the conflict to his Parisian colleagues, and fretted about the health of his mother-in-law, whom he supported with proceeds from royalties. By November 15, 1939, prospects for a trip abroad had begun to fade. Although he still “counted on going” to the United States, he made it clear that he might have to cancel. “If I don’t go to America,” he told Astrov, “perhaps some personal effects and toiletries might be sent to me.”¹²⁰ His list included 24-stave manuscript paper, an overcoat he had left behind, letter-writing paper, and a fashion magazine “pour madame.” Near the end of the letter, Prokofiev’s last to Astrov, he thanks him for helping his mother-in-law and for sending postage stamps of Mickey Mouse to his children for their collection.

Prokofiev’s travel problems were described in accurate, succinct form in the January 10, 1940, edition of the *New York Times*: “Serge Prokofieff, Russian composer, will be unable to come to America this season to fulfill his engagement as guest conductor of the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, it was announced yesterday. Political conditions have made it impossible for him to obtain the necessary visas.”¹²¹ Stravinsky, the newspaper added, would substitute for the absent Prokofiev at the podium—a bitter irony, given that Stravinsky’s dominance of the international music scene had spurred Prokofiev’s decision to relocate to the Soviet Union in 1936.

Stalin’s Image in Music

Near the end of the traumatic year of 1939, Prokofiev wrote a paean to Stalin. The work, which was commissioned by the Radio Committee in October, is a thirteen-minute cantata titled *Zdravitsa* (A Toast), part of an

inundation of musical and verbal salutations to the Great Leader and Teacher on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (December 21, 1939). In explicit contrast to the reality of mass incarceration, starvation, and execution, these works offer benign images of resplendent harvests and harmonious labor. Their creators—Prokofiev included—represented Soviet life in whitewashed, future-perfect guise.

Prokofiev worked quickly on his birthday present, taking pains to ensure that its harmonic language did not stray out of bounds, and that the melodic writing conveyed something of the fixed-smile cheer of the libretto. To avoid repeating the fundamental miscalculation of the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, he based the libretto on poems about Stalin. These poems came from a massive (534-page) Pravda publishing house collection dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution. It bears the title *Folk Arts of the USSR*; the recently deceased Gorky is credited as editor in chief. Among other poems, Prokofiev set the first three verses of “The Sun Shines Differently” (Po-inomu svetit solntse) for the beginning of *Zdravitsa*; the first, fourth, and fifth verses of “Lenin’s Great Pupil” (Velikiy uchyonik Lenina) for the ending; and the first verse of “I Would Travel to Moscow” (Ya bi s’yezdila v Moskvu) for a section of the middle.¹²² *Zdravitsa* also includes a fragment of a Russian heroic ballad, or *bilina*, called “The Praise to Stalin Will Be Eternal” (Slava Stalinu budet vechnaya).¹²³ (The ballad is fancifully credited to a storyteller named Marfa Kryukova, a resident of the village of Nizhnyaya Zolotitsa, near Arkhangelsk.) In setting these texts to music, Prokofiev changed some of the words and reordered some of the lines. The available evidence indicates that he did not rummage through the Pravda collection for suitable verses himself. Rather, they were chosen for him by Dina Ermilova, an editor with the literature division of the Radio Committee, and Aleksandr Tishchenko, the director of its music division. “Esteemed Sergey Sergeyevich,” Tishchenko wrote on November 16, 1939, “I am forwarding you a selection of materials which, from our viewpoint, might be of particular interest as source texts for songs dedicated to I. V. Stalin.”¹²⁴ The Radio Committee ensured that the *Zdravitsa* libretto did not breach protocol by assigning Prokofiev approved published texts. Had they been newly written, they would have been automatically sent for review to the Special Division (Osobiy sektor) of the Central Committee, which included a department “exclusively occupied with the State formation of the Stalin cult,” including “preparation of collected works for publication, approval of journal and newspaper

articles with accounts of Stalin's life and work, literary Staliniana, and so forth."¹²⁵

The frontispiece of the 1939 piano-vocal score indicates that the *Zdravitsa* libretto comes from Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Kumik, Kurd, Mari, and Mordovian sources. The Pravda collection claims to represent thirty-five different peoples, with the contents devoted to five topics: Lenin, Stalin, the civil war, the Red Army, and Soviet nationhood. These claims, ethnographically speaking, are exaggerations. The sources for the libretto are distillates: they allude to, rather than actually come from, the peoples of the far-flung republics. Like the verses chosen for *Songs of Our Days*, the verses selected for *Zdravitsa* are examples of invented folklore. The "anonymous" texts are by official writers.

The third edition of *Zdravitsa* (1946) includes an English-language translation that Prokofiev had a hand in commissioning. ("Since Muzgiz is planning to publish *Zdravitsa*," he wrote to Atovmyan on September 20, 1945, "it would be good to commission straightaway an English translation from Shneyerson, who in collaboration with an American successfully coped with *Alexander Nevsky*."¹²⁶ Besides this bilingual edition, the Moscow Conservatory library houses no fewer than eleven editions of *Zdravitsa* published between 1941 and 1984. The two editions (1970 and 1984) that postdate the Stalinist period replace the toast to the ruler with a toast to the Party. The ritualistic de-Stalinization of the score was undertaken by the same individual—the poet and librettist Aleksey Mashistov—who had de-Stalinized *Songs of Our Days*.¹²⁷ Prokofiev's *Cantata for the Thirtieth Anniversary of October* would also be cleansed of Stalin references under Khrushchev.¹²⁸ In every edition, however, the mood of *Zdravitsa* remains the same. The singers declare that happiness blossoms in the Slavic lands, and that Soviet life, like Soviet farmland, overflows with abundance. In the first (unaltered) stanza, the singers declaim: "There has never been a field so green / The village is filled with unheard-of happiness / Our life has never been so happy / Our rye has hitherto never been so plentiful."¹²⁹

The sketches for *Zdravitsa* find Prokofiev conceiving it as a seven-part rondo, with each section terminating with a variation of a C-major refrain in the brass and strings.¹³⁰ (In accord with the composer's expanded definition of tonality, the refrain alternates between C major, C minor, and A-flat major harmonies.) After sketching the refrain, Prokofiev verbally itemized its appearances throughout the cantata. He indicated that it would first sound at the end of the orchestral introduction to the work, and then recur in

the section devoted to an “old woman” from Mari who imagines being a teenager again and journeying to Moscow to thank Stalin for her good life. The passage dedicated to the old woman would be followed by a Russian *chastushka* or limerick tune.¹³¹ For the beginning of the next episode, Prokofiev resorted to recycling, importing the text and music of “Send-Off” (Provodi), one of a collection of folklore-inspired mass songs that he composed between 1937 and 1939.¹³² The text comes from the same 1937 collection as the rest of the *Zdravitsa* libretto: it tells the tale of a villager named Aksinya who is sent to Moscow for a Kremlin meeting with Stalin—her symbolic husband—in honor of her work. (The text is fancifully credited to Danila Letashkov, a twenty-five-year-old member of the Kommunar collective farm in Belorussia.) Prokofiev modeled the music of this episode on the laments that are traditionally sung in village settings before the weddings of young brides. There follows a reprise of the ending of the *chastushka*, and then an extremely unusual passage—the first section of *Zdravitsa* drafted by Prokofiev—involving ascending and descending C-major scales over A-flat and G pedal points in the brass. The scalar runs, which underscore a description of the suffering of the Russian people under the tsars, cascade through the bass, tenor, alto, and soprano parts. The overall sensation is one of a gigantic historical shudder.

The December 21 premiere of *Zdravitsa*, conducted by Golovanov, received positive reviews, as did the subsequent performances in the various jubilee concerts held in Stalin's honor.¹³³ The work remained in the repertoire until Stalin's death, and received special attention in an essay in *Sovetskaya muzika* titled “Stalin's Image in Music.” (The two authors struggled to find allusions to folklore in the score—“in the first chorus . . . the festive stamp of glorious, epochal folksongs is audible”—but then retreated, concluding only that “numerous themes, and the vigor and cheer of the score,” charmed the listener.)¹³⁴ In addition to overseeing the publication of the first edition in 1939, Prokofiev served as a “consultant” for a May 11, 1940, recording.¹³⁵ His younger son Oleg remembered hearing *Zdravitsa* broadcast through loudspeakers on the street during either the winter of 1939–40 or 1940–41:

Incredibly lonely it seemed as it resounded throughout the deserted Chkalov Street, where we lived then . . . Winter, the wind whirls snowflakes over the dark, gloomy asphalt, and the national choir booms out these strange harmonies. I was used to them, though, and that calmed me down. I ran

home to tell the big news: “Daddy! They are playing you outside...” But he already knew; and, as usual, the matter was never discussed again.¹³⁶

The contrast between the sunshine-drenched imagery of the *Zdravitsa* libretto and the circumstances in which it was performed is telling; so, too, is the muteness of Prokofiev’s response to its success. The last lines, which describe Stalin as the “flame” of the people’s “blood,” attest to the high political stakes of the commission.

In a brief essay on Prokofiev’s Soviet period, the musicologist Vladimir Zak argues that the red-ink markings (the “crimson zigzags”) made by Golovanov on his copy of the *Zdravitsa* score inadvertently emblemize the macabre context of its creation.¹³⁷ Perhaps: but one must keep in mind that the score was conceived in honor of the individual responsible for this macabre context. There is no subversion in the work, no contestation of cults of personalities. It cannot be rescued from the dustbin of musical agitprop. Far from denoting what Zak calls the “art of the subtext,” it shows Prokofiev seeking, and finding, the formula for official approval.¹³⁸

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DropBooks

The Pushkin Centennial

February 10, 1937, marked the centennial of Aleksandr Pushkin's death. The celebration was an exhausting, protracted event that witnessed a reconception of the great poet's life and works. From the aristocratic, serf-owning, enlightened conservative of historical reality, who fathered a son by one of his serfs and sold others to the army, Pushkin became a political emblem of the freedom-loving Russian people, a social emblem of rustic values, and a cultural emblem of directness and transparency of expression. The editors of *Pravda*, who hyperbolically ascribed Pushkin's death to "a foreign aristocratic scoundrel and tsarist hireling," declared that he was "entirely ours, entirely Soviet, insofar as it is Soviet power that has inherited all of the best in our people and that is, itself, the realization of the people's best hopes."¹ The centennial, observed nationwide and involving thousands of cultural workers, interpreted Pushkin, through selective slanting of the facts, as an anti-tsarist advocate and radical democrat.

To certify this official version of Pushkin, the government published critical editions of his works, organized conferences and discussions, and commissioned cinematic and theatrical treatments of his life. The overseers of the centennial preparations were themselves overseen in an effort to ensure the consistency of the ideological distortions. The planning, re-planning, realization and—more often than not—cancellation of events took place in an atmosphere of dread. As Stephanie Sandler, to whom the preceding points are indebted, comments: "Newspapers in January and February 1937 featured two stories that received equally intense coverage:

the trial, sentencing, and execution of Karl Radek, Yuriy Pyatakov, and fifteen others; and the Pushkin celebration.”² Ecstatic press accounts to the contrary, the centennial was the locus of different types of crisis, the most obvious—and wretchedly most benign—being the consolidation of State control over the entire Russian cultural heritage.

Prokofiev contributed to the centennial by fulfilling commissions for three large-scale orchestral works: incidental music for a theatrical production, by Tairov, of Pushkin’s novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin* (1831); a score for a filmed version, directed by Mikhaïl Romm, of Pushkin’s short story *The Queen of Spades* (1833); and incidental music for a theatrical production, by Meyerhold, of Pushkin’s historical drama *Boris Godunov* (1825). The composer had formally committed to the three collaborative projects just after relocating to Moscow in the spring of 1936. He also composed three Pushkin Romances for soprano voice and piano, a setting of the poems “Pine Trees” (Sosni), “Crimson Dawn” (Rumyanoy zaryoyu), and “In Your Chamber” (V tvoyu svetlitsu); he and Lina premiered this work in an April 20, 1937, radio broadcast. In addition, Prokofiev considered but did not undertake a setting of *Mozart and Salieri* (1830) for the actor and director Yuriy Zavadsky. Upon listing these projects to Alpers in a July 25, 1936, letter, Prokofiev joked: “Is this not just like the raving of a lunatic? But such is how it is, and the Pushkin centennial is to blame.”³

Neither the theatrical productions nor the film were realized, for reasons unrelated to the composer. Meyerhold—who held a post on the original Pushkin centennial committee, formed by decree on July 27, 1934,⁴ and on the second committee that was organized in 1936 after the death of Gorky—was censured for creative and political transgressions, as were Tairov and Romm. The three projects unraveled in succession, leaving Prokofiev with almost nothing to show for his inspired labor and his collaborators fearing, at a minimum, the ruin of their careers. Prokofiev reused some of the music in later works; for several decades, the rest of it languished in manuscript form, unorchestrated and unperformed. Recent recordings by Michail Jurowski for the Capriccio label have begun to give it its due. This chapter takes up each score in turn, lingering, as testament to its conceptual richness, on *Boris Godunov*.

Eugene Onegin

Of his five centennial projects, Prokofiev claimed that *Eugene Onegin* “interested [him] the most,” largely because it allowed him to respond creatively to Chaikovsky’s operatic treatment of the same subject—albeit in the realm

of incidental music.⁵ In a June 22, 1936, article written for *Vechernyaya Moskva*, he explained his approach to the project:

The play *Eugene Onegin*, adapted for the stage by S[igizmund] D. Krzhizhanovsky, highlights those parts of Pushkin's novel that are not included in Chaikovsky's opera. I believe it will be interesting to see Lensky arguing with Onegin over a bottle of Aÿ, Tatyana visiting his empty house, or Onegin "on the banks of the Neva." It is a well-known fact that opinions about Chaikovsky's opera were divided. Some considered the composer's interpretation to be perfect; others, on the other hand, believed that it robbed the novel of the intrinsic humor peculiar to the poet and gave it the pessimistic touch characteristic of Chaikovsky. I personally shall endeavor to capture the true spirit of Pushkin.⁶

One problem with Chaikovsky's opera, according to Prokofiev, was the absence of rusticity in the first dance-based episode (act 2, scene 1), which takes place at the estate of Olga Larina, Lensky's fiancée. In conversation with the dramatist Osaf Litovsky, Prokofiev derided Chaikovsky's use of "chic, metropolitan music" to represent a "provincial landholder's evening," whereas in reality, the attendees would have "danced to a piano" that sounded "a bit broken-down and jangling" with a coarse "tram-blyam" polka being the evening's highlight.⁷ When Prokofiev quipped that "new, more faithful" operatic versions of *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades* could perhaps be written, Litovsky, whose tastes were exceptionally conservative, called his bluff: "So why don't you write them?" The purported answer: "What—compete with Chaikovsky?!"⁸

Prokofiev's desire "to capture the true spirit of Pushkin" proved problematic for the simple reason that Tairov planned to stage not a dramatic reading of *Eugene Onegin* but a dramatic enactment of it. He assigned the onerous task of adapting Pushkin's text to the ingenious litterateur Krzhizhanovsky, a prominent, if little published, member of the Moscow arts scene who improvised a career as a fiction writer, dramatist, historian, and educator. During his lifetime, just eight of his stories and one of novels appeared in print. Tairov first met Krzhizhanovsky after becoming familiar with his unpublished *Tales for Wunderkinder* (*Skazki dlya vunderkindov*); he thereafter invited him to join his theater, first as an acting instructor

(Krzhizhanovsky devised a course on the “psychology of the stage”) and then as a dramatist.⁹

For Tairov, the first phase in the adaptation of *Eugene Onegin* involved teasing out its latent political content. In an April 6, 1936, public forum, he emphasized the importance, when staging a classic, of becoming intimately familiar with its original historical context. Such knowledge, he argued, enabled the director to identify and highlight those features most relevant to the present day. In his staging of *Eugene Onegin*, Tairov resolved to highlight what he perceived to be the title character's socially predetermined path to ruin. He reimagined Onegin as an “absolutely destroyed person,” the antithesis of a “Decembrist” (a reference to the group of military officers and liberal thinkers who agitated to prevent the accession of Nikolay I to the throne in 1825).¹⁰ Onegin becomes a superfluous person: dissolute, exhausted, and smitten because he lacks intention, the impulse to fulfill a goal. Tatyana, in contrast, “bears those natural Russian female features that could have allowed her to become the wife of a Decembrist—though it does not happen within the confines of the novel—consciously and willingly following him into exile.” Her virtue resides in her decision to suppress, rather than indulge, her feelings for Onegin. Tairov's staging would not, it appears, have featured either a “tragic” or a “happy” ending, as in *Romeo and Juliet*; instead, the plot was to pivot around Tatyana's purposeful control of natural impulses and Onegin's purposeless submission to them.

For Krzhizhanovsky, the first phase in the adaptation involved replacing Pushkin's garrulous, self-conscious narrator with characters who speak in the first person. The narrator does not disappear entirely; rather, he is replaced by an itinerant “poet” (or, as labeled in the manuscript of Prokofiev's piano score, “companion”) who appears onstage in the final scene to quote from book 1, stanza 1: “Will the hour of my freedom come? 'Tis time, 'tis time! To it I call.”¹¹ The “poet” facilitates the bittersweet last encounter between Tatyana, who undergoes a psychological metamorphosis in the adaptation, and Onegin, who does not.

In consultation with Tairov, Krzhizhanovsky reordered scenes, deleted verses, blended others, and removed some of the philosophical, literary, and botanical asides. Elizaveta Dattel, the first musicologist to work on Prokofiev's music for the stage, points out that the scenarist transplanted the discussion between Larina and her neighbors about Tatyana's reluctance to settle down from long after her first encounter with Onegin (book 7, stanzas 25–27) to just before that encounter. Krzhizhanovsky also scrubbed the passage in

which Onegin sends a letter to Tatyana (book 8, stanza 32). In Dattel's opinion, this change "destroyed" the psychological and emotional symmetry of the novel in verse, whereby the two characters, in different ways, upbraid one another in prose.¹² And there were remarkable additions to the drama: Krzhizhanovsky's adaptation begins with Lensky kneeling glumly at the grave of his fiancée's father, Dmitriy Larin, where he recites Pushkin's 1821 poem "I have outlasted all desire" (*Ya perezhil svoi zhelan'ya*). This poem, and the action it allegorizes, cannot be found in *Eugene Onegin*. It is one of several other Pushkin texts that Krzhizhanovsky included in his adaptation to compensate for having eliminated the narrator. Given the familiarity of Pushkin's tightly knitted text to Russian readers, the alterations could hardly have avoided drawing attention.

There was logic to the adaptation, to which Prokofiev responded even as others objected. The text would pass through several revisions, based first on positive exchanges between Tairov and Krzhizhanovsky, then on negative exchanges between Krzhizhanovsky, a commission of Pushkin scholars,¹³ and, ultimately, Glavrepertkom, which was headed by Litovsky.

Prokofiev composed his music based on either the first or second version of the adaptation, which he heard at a May 1936 read-through in Tairov's office. The extant records of the project include Krzhizhanovsky's undated eighty-four-page typescript of either the first or second version with Prokofiev's marginalia concerning its musical possibilities, along with a four-page directorial lighting and blocking guide called "The Calendar of *Onegin*."¹⁴ The autograph piano score contains both finished and unfinished passages (the former in ink, the latter in pencil), orchestration indications, and directorial references.¹⁵ Comparing the typescript and the piano score reveals both consistencies and discrepancies. These latter attest to the reactionary uproar surrounding Krzhizhanovsky's adaptation and the pressure he came under to atone for his unorthodox distillation of Pushkin.

The most significant of the divergences concerns the chorus of frolicking students that Krzhizhanovsky may have devised for the final scene at a packed soirée in St. Petersburg—though, to be sure, in an upper-class salon it would never have been appropriate. Like the opening grave scene, this text, which comes from Pushkin's 1814 poem "To the Students" (*K studentam*), is not found in *Eugene Onegin*. Prokofiev drafted the chorus but did not assign it a number in his piano score, suggesting that Krzhizhanovsky perhaps decided to cut the chorus from the staging, with Prokofiev following suit. (Both the 1973 published score and the 2005 Capriccio recording include

it as an appendix.) Further evidence of the problems with Krzhizhanovsky's adaptation appears in the autograph piano score, on page 6 in the lower margin. "Based on the new plan," Prokofiev jotted down in pencil, "Onegin and Tatyana at this point leave, following Onegin's lecture in the garden."¹⁶ "The new plan" refers to either the second or third version of Krzhizhanovsky's adaptation, which restored something of the ordering of Pushkin's original.

The exact nature and timing of the Pushkin commission and Glavrepertkom adjudications of the adaptation are unknown, but they obviously caused enormous stress for Tairov, as evidenced by his communications to Krzhizhanovsky in the summer of 1936 (the former was in Kislovodsk, the latter in Odessa). Tairov specifically mentions Litovsky and Glavrepertkom, and desperately stresses the need to hasten the reworking of the adaptation to reflect their criticisms.¹⁷ Prokofiev was in Moscow and Polenovo during the ordeal; his involvement in the negotiations over Krzhizhanovsky's text was evidently minimal.

Against this backdrop, Tairov's public remarks about the *Eugene Onegin* project seem almost absurdly benign. In a pair of interviews with *Krasnaya gazeta* and *Vechernyaya Moskva*, Tairov assures the reader that his work with Krzhizhanovsky on the adaptation, which had commenced in the winter of 1935, would be as true to Pushkin as possible:

I have been working with S. Krzhizhanovsky on an edition of the text for the play for about half a year now. We are approaching this task with all of the necessary faithfulness toward Pushkin and trying in the main to bring to light those dramatic situations that Pushkin himself incorporated into *Onegin*. The work is complicated and laborious, especially since we began by relinquishing the narrator's role.¹⁸

In the first, more detailed interview, Tairov problematically assures his readers that "to be sure we won't be adding a single alien word and almost nothing will be taken from other Pushkin works." The staging, he added, posed "enormous difficulties" for Prokofiev, owing to the inescapable association of the subject matter with Chaikovsky. The composer later tempered this point, acknowledging that "to write the music for *Eugene Onegin* is a tempting proposition, but at the same time perhaps a thankless task." Although he managed to find "true" musical images for the characters, he "had to rewrite the themes and make several sketches" before arriving at what he needed.¹⁹

What he sought was sound that humbly served the characters and their actions. Prokofiev downplayed the significance of his music for spoken-word theater, commenting in an August 1936 interview for *Teatr i dramaturgiya* (Theater and Dramaturgy) that its role needed to be “modest”:

The listener goes to an opera or a ballet or a symphony concert with a special desire to hear the music, but the viewer going to the theater is not interested in the accompaniment to the staging. Hence music for a play does not need to solve particular problems; it must accompany it and, above all else, be understandable to, and calculated for, the less-skilled listener. It is best when a composer restricts himself to a handful of melodies and repeats them frequently: by the end the viewer will be humming them. For a play it is better to compose several simple melodies than many complex or hard-to-grasp ones.²⁰

He added that the creative process involved translating visual images into musical ones: “I allow myself five to ten days in order to ‘see’ the performance, that is to say, to take in the actors’ features, the illustration of their emotions, and the illustration of the events.”

Accordingly, Prokofiev created distinct musical portraits for each of the characters in *Eugene Onegin*, which he nuanced over the course of the drama through transposition, modulation, and changes of timbre. His approach is subtler than his own comments would suggest: in several instances, the melodic shadings provide psychological insight into the characters. It also creates a very Chaikovskian feeling of fateful predestination. This is most apparent in the handling of the opening and closing melody of the score, associated with the poet Lensky and specifically his recitation of “I have outlasted all desire.” Initially cast in G minor, the meandering, disconsolate melody lurks behind crucial plot events and represents Lensky’s sad destiny. Sung by an offstage chorus of female and male voices in the interlude (the ending of No. 4 in the autograph piano score), it prefaces both Larina’s musings with her neighbors about Tatyana’s future prospects (“‘What should one do? Tatyana is no infant,’ / quoth the old lady with a groan”) as well as Tatyana’s first appearance.²¹ The melody returns over tremolo strings in the passage (No. 32) that precedes Onegin and Lensky’s duel.

Prokofiev also represented Lensky's solitude. Solitude is the natural condition of Pushkin's novel in verse, but the narrator fills in the silences, the blank spaces (marked by empty stanzas in the text) between the characters. Prokofiev, in contrast, allows these silences to resonate. Although Lensky is romantically involved with Olga, the composer neither depicts their interactions nor assigns Olga a melody of her own. The broad C-major theme labeled "Lensky thinks about Olga" (No. 3) is static, nondevelopmental, and pastoral, reminiscent in its intervallic contours and transparent scoring of the pristine Ukrainian landscape music in *Semyon Kotko*.

The isolated mysteries of Tatyana's personality are captured in a cluster of interrelated themes. Her first appearance (No. 5) introduces a binary-form melody in B-flat major (the relative major of Lensky's fate music) that stresses the submediant and involves extreme contrasts of register. The first half of the melody belongs to the flute and the second half to muted first violins; the first half is then repeated by the clarinet in the pensive low register. There follow three variations, which increase in length and differ in timbre, adding nuance to Tatyana's emotional and psychological portrayal. The first (No. 8) accompanies Tatyana's initial meeting with Onegin; it comprises a single phrase in A-flat major scored for bassoons, cellos, and basses. The second (also No. 8), scored for English horn and alto saxophone, connotes her thoughts in two phrases that cadence respectively in A-flat and D-flat major. And the third (No. 9) comprises three phrases in the upper and lower strings that modulate from D-flat major to B-flat minor (phrase 1), then to E major (phrase 2), and then to D-flat major (phrase 3). This longest and most involved variation matches her unbridled declaration of love.

Listening to the variations can be likened to watching a painter adding detail to a portrait. Tatyana's music does not describe or narrate events but denotes a subjective interior where recollections and impressions coalesce. In the letter scene, for example (Nos. 10–12), Prokofiev repeats the three versions of Tatyana's melody intact, allowing them to commingle in the mind of the listener. His approach to the scene counters that of Chaikovsky, who represents the writing of the letter word for word. He strings together four Romances that depict both the physical act of putting quill to paper and Tatyana's conflicted emotions—her excitement as well as trepidation about exposing her feelings to her beloved.²² The Romances impose an unnatural structure on the scene (each stands for a separate portion of the letter), but the boundaries between them are obfuscated, and their melodic and harmonic contents subject to unconventional transformations. The difference

between Chaikovsky's and Prokofiev's approaches to the letter scene rests on the distinction between teleological and nonteleological modes of representation. The first composer charts Tatyana's *Bildungsroman* maturation, the second one does not. Prokofiev, like Pushkin, allows Tatyana to remain an enigma.

For the drama's conclusion (No. 44), which portrays Tatyana's triumph over her own helpless need for Onegin, Prokofiev repeats the second variation, initially associated with her psychological state in the wake of her first meeting with Onegin. Thus he poses a riddle: does the repetition reveal that, beneath the glitter and glamour of Tatyana's aristocratic trappings, "the indifferent princess, / the inaccessible goddess" remains the "enamored, poor and simple" maiden that Onegin had once spurned?²³ Does it reveal that Onegin cannot comprehend her transformation, and that his memory of Tatyana is more real to him than her physical presence? Does it confirm that Tatyana has not matured, because maturation is impossible for the honestly divided self? Or is something even more complicated happening: an acknowledgment that, in Olga Peter Hasty's words, Tatyana's "experiences are not stretched out in a line, but form instead an interrelated organic complex"?²⁴ Prokofiev collapses the past, present, and future of Tatyana's relationship with Onegin, presenting the organically interrelated variations of her melody in and out of order.

Toward the end of his score, moreover, he varies the variations, partitioning Tatyana's music into discrete blocks that can be distributed throughout the drama "at the director's discretion." On page 14 (recto) of the manuscript, Prokofiev helpfully lists the manner in which the blocks can be separated and combined: "1) A, 2) B, 3) C, 4) A+B, 5) A+C, 6) A+B+C, 7) A+B+C+D+E." His approach to *Eugene Onegin*, as it was later to *Boris Godunov*, counters the aesthetics of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* by eschewing through-composition in favor of redeployable and recombinable cells. One senses that he wanted his music to remain elusively distant from its own subject matter. Like Pushkin's Tatyana, a fantasist who does not allow her inner world to be tamed by the outer world, Prokofiev's music is not contingent or dependent on the stage events with which it is aligned.

Especially in light of the controversy surrounding Krzhizhanovsky's adaptation, it requires noting that the published piano and orchestral score of Prokofiev's *Eugene Onegin* misrepresents Prokofiev's intentions. Dattel, the editor of the score and the first person to attempt to document its history, puzzled over the inconsistencies between the novel in verse, its adaptation,

and the music for the adaptation.²⁵ Supporting the 1960s and 1970s consensus that Krzhizhanovsky was a maverick writer who fell into political disfavor by bowdlerizing Pushkin, Dattel proposes that Prokofiev at first “refused to write the music” for his script, “only changing wrath to mercy under pressure and persistent pleading from Tairov who pledged to ‘rework’ the script jointly with the author.”²⁶ There is absolutely no proof for this claim. And even if it existed the basic fact remains that Prokofiev honorably fulfilled his commission to write music *for* the adaptation. Dattel adheres to the claim, however, to justify editing the music of *Eugene Onegin* in a manner that reconciles it with the novel in verse. She suppressed Krzhizhanovsky from her edition in an effort to make it faithful to Pushkin, the result being a restoration of something that never existed in the first place. Dattel altered the sequence of episodes in the score, changed some of the composer’s stage instructions, deleted some of those instructions, moved lines from one character to another, and, most strikingly, restored the role of the narrator. Some examples:

1. The comment that follows the second fermata of No. 1 in the manuscript—“[Lensky] lowered himself to the edge of the grave. He thinks.”—is missing from the edition.
2. Prokofiev indicates that the music for No. 2 comes “after the words ‘will my end come’ [pridyot li moy konets]” are read; in the edition, the music is heard at the same time as these words.
3. The instruction preceding the music of No. 3 (“after the cuckoo sounds the hour”) is missing from the edition.
4. Larina’s words (“What should one do? Tatyana is no infant”), which Prokofiev intended to be heard against the backdrop of an offstage chorus at the end of No. 4, are missing from the edition.
5. For No. 5, Prokofiev specified that the music “accompanies Tatyana’s words (perhaps not completely)”; in the edition, Dattel suppresses these words, which were written by Krzhizhanovsky, in favor of a direct quotation from Pushkin’s novel in verse. The narrator, rather than Tatyana, speaks over the music.²⁷

The edition implies that Prokofiev conceived his music as an accompaniment to a dramatic reading of Pushkin’s verses. Several episodes in his score, however, were conceived as interludes meant to be heard between, rather

than beneath, the verses. Thus Prokofiev's music lends form to the text, not the other way around.

Arguably Dattel's most striking violation of the original score affects the dream scene, which occupies book 5, stanzas 11–21, of Pushkin's novel in verse. After mentioning Tatyana's interest in fortune-telling, the narrator describes a nightmare in which Tatyana finds herself menaced by an out-sized, appalling bear in a snow-filled valley. The creature helps her to cross a rickety bridge over a turbulent stream, but then chases her deeper into the woods; Tatyana loses her earrings, a shoe, and a handkerchief. Her frenzied, erotically charged flight ends at a festive gathering of mutant fairy-tale creatures. Onegin presides authoritatively over the feast, which is interrupted by the arrival of Olga and Lensky. The two men argue, and Onegin stabs Lensky. This last event would seem to be an obvious portent of the duel in book 6, but Pushkin skews the analogy by rendering the dream version of the event more realistic than the real version. And in accordance with Russian folklore, the bear would seem to be a stand-in for Tatyana's unnamed future husband, except that he has not yet been introduced to the plot. This is a dream that predicts, rather than recollects, events.

When Krzhizhanovsky revamped *Eugene Onegin*, he transplanted the dream scene from before to after Onegin and Lensky have their dispute in the party scene (Tatyana's name day fête). The dream still precedes their actual duel, but the anxieties that it represents are now justified. Art (the dream) no longer creates life (the duel) but reflects it. Or, more accurately, it competes with it—this being a central conceit of Krzhizhanovsky's phantasmagoric fiction. (His short story "Side Branch," for example, centers on the activities of a dream factory whose managers seek to conquer reality.) In his notes to Krzhizhanovsky's script for the dream scene, Prokofiev reveals his intent to infuse "Tatyana's main theme" with "tragic elements."²⁸ The result, in the piano score, is an A-flat major version of the theme appended to the tremolo-laden variation aligned with Onegin. The last five measures of the passage (No. 27) introduce an A-flat minor chord in the low brasses, a scalar descent in A minor, and then a return to the A-flat minor chord. The core of the dream scene (No. 28), in which Tatyana is chased by the bear, features a semitonal ostinato pattern in the tuba (representing the bear) and a melodic figure that leaps up and down by fourths and fifths in the upper woodwinds (Tatyana's efforts to elude the bear). Both figures are syncopated, and both are interrupted by falling eighth-note figures in the oboes (signaling her

stumbling in the deep snow). The power of the music resides in its off-kilter, overlapping repetitions, which suggest an endless chase, an infinite pattern of kinetic impulses. It is the least sectionalized number in a score that relies on sectionalizing, that consists of isolated musical snapshots denoting thoughts and emotions.

Krzhizhanovsky's contentious decision to relocate the dream scene sets Tatyana's party at the center of the drama. The party scene opens with the strains of a "tryam-blam" polka emanating from a distant hall. Aberrant dance music represents aberrant events: much like Onegin himself, the dance music offends sensibility. It sounds wrong; it is a breach. Prokofiev scores the dance (No. 20) for two provincial, out-of-tune harpsichords, the invisible performers carelessly barreling through the five-measure phrases at an insane tempo—a comical comment on the hullabaloo that greets the arrival at the party of a pompous regimental commander. There ensues an enigmatic waltz (No. 21), which Prokofiev scores first for string quintet and then, in a jarring contrast, for the two harpsichords. Onegin enters the room and encounters Tatyana for the first time since responding to her letter. They exchange words; he gazes at her attentively, briefly warming her heart. In the waltz's opening section, the music is seductively languorous, the first violin sliding down a chromatic scale over a G minor accompaniment. But in the middle section, the sound turns brittle, with the harpsichords introducing a jagged second theme in C minor, the emphasis placed on intervals of the fifth and octave. The concluding section is interrupted by a recurrence of the polka (No. 22), this time scored for wind band. In the ensuing minuet (No. 23), Onegin engages in a repartee with the landowner Zaretsky, who will serve as Lensky's second in the duel. There follows a lyrical mazurka (No. 24), during which Onegin catches Olga's eye and begins to flirt with her. The scene concludes with a repetition of the enigmatic waltz, this time with the harpsichords preceding rather than following the string quintet. Onegin dances with Olga and, to Lensky's dismay, gains her favor.

The waltz is not, of course, realistic music; the clash, or duel, between the string quintet and the harpsichords suggests the breakdown of decorum that underpins the entire scene. In the party scene, more than in any other, the distinctions between the competing binaries in the tale—desire and decorum, art and life, the aesthetic and the social—dissolve. The first incarnation of the waltz in the sultry strings might be interpreted as representing Tatyana's encounter with Onegin, and then, in the brittle harpsichords, the false hopes this encounter engenders. As Onegin dismisses Tatyana in favor of

Olga, Prokofiev dehumidifies the languorous air. When, at the other end of the scene, the waltz recurs with the instrumentation reversed, Lensky realizes that his friend Onegin has betrayed him. The monotonous plinking of the keyboards cedes to the evocative strains of the violins: Olga is seduced.

But the waltz permits another, less literal reading. By conflating the two groups of instruments, Prokofiev signals that they might in fact stand for the same thing: the emptiness of Onegin's persona. The waltz blends a hackneyed Romantic sound with a hackneyed Baroque sound, and thus captures a central theme in Pushkin's novel in verse: namely, that Onegin has no actual identity, existing merely as a projection of Tatyana's overcrowded literary imagination. In the middle of book 7, which describes her visit to Onegin's gloomy abandoned estate, she peruses his two or three favorite novels, wondering

Who's he then? Can it be—an imitation,
An insignificant phantasm, or else
A Muscovite in Harold's mantle,
A glossary of other people's megrims,
A complete lexicon of words in vogue? ...
Might he not be, in fact, a parody?²⁹

Prokofiev answers the question in the affirmative, twice representing Onegin in the score with a mock French song to words by Jacques Malfilâtre—"Elle était fille, / Elle était amoureuse"—and then, in the party scene, representing him with mock waltz strains.³⁰

Ultimately, the waltz could be interpreted on a meta-narrative level as conflating the original eighteenth-century conception of Onegin with the subsequent nineteenth-century reconception. Prokofiev juxtaposes, in short, the passionate stylizations of Chaikovsky's operatic version of the tale with the dispassionate stylizations of Pushkin's source text. In the party scene, the historical reception of *Eugene Onegin* is mapped onto *Eugene Onegin* itself. Reading Krzhizhanovsky's remarkable adaptation, one can only wonder if this was part of his, and Tairov's, plan for the staging.



Work on the staging ended abruptly. On December 3, 1936, Prokofiev received a note from the deputy director (surname Isoldov) of the Chamber Theater, who reported that "the All-Union Committee on Arts Affairs has categorically decreed that the spectacle *Eugene Onegin* cannot be staged by

the State Moscow Chamber Theater. In view of this, the theater asks you not to carry out any further work on the orchestration of the music (of the score) for this spectacle; the contract of May 25 of this year, which required the score to be delivered to the theater and consultation work to be carried out during the rehearsal period, is hereby annulled.”³¹ The letter arrived when Prokofiev was in Brussels; news of the cancellation of the production, and that Tairov had taken ill as a consequence, came to him late.

The cancellation stemmed from the fallout over Tairov's previous project: a staging, in the form of a play with incidental music, of Aleksandr Borodin's 1867 comic opera *The Heroic Warriors*. The staging relied on a script written by the poet Demyan Bednĭy (Pridvorov), who earned esteem in the immediate post-revolutionary period but faced a crisis in 1930 when Stalin questioned the ideological orientation of his poems.³² Although confused as to the precise nature of his errors, Bednĭy apologized and managed to restore, even improve, his previous standing. *Pravda* lauded his two decades of patriotic service to Bolshevism in a May 20, 1931, article, and he received a coveted Order of Lenin on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday in 1933—a first for a poet.³³ In 1934, however, Bednĭy inadvertently erred again by accepting Tairov's invitation to collaborate on *The Heroic Warriors*. The original Borodin opera, which survived just one performance, relies on a pastiche of quotations and stylistic allusions to lampoon Russian operatic realism, French operetta, and grand opera. The plot takes on the clichés of heroic ballads, often to hilarious effect. In his revision, Bednĭy sought to enhance the farce while also paying homage to the national traditions from which the farce sprang—a difficult feat that met with extreme hostility. No sooner had the play opened than it was closed by decree. On November 14, 1936, the Committee on Arts Affairs, echoing a Politburo decision, announced that Bednĭy and Tairov had subverted history by depicting the “brigands” of Kievan Rus as “positive revolutionary elements” and slandering the epic characters who epitomize “the Russian people's heroic qualities.”³⁴ On November 15, an article by Kerzhentsev on the topic appeared in *Pravda*.

Bednĭy's and Tairov's colleagues were solicited by NKVD agents for their thoughts on the decision to prohibit *The Heroic Warriors*. Once the “Secret Political Department” of the NKVD had gathered the data, a report was generated. It opens with Tairov's admission that he committed a colossal blunder with *The Heroic Warriors*, though he qualifies that the Committee on Arts Affairs had itself at one time backed the staging. His actress wife, Alisa Koonen, remarks that the scandal had caused Tairov heart troubles,

but adds, in a bow to official pressure, that it was a useful lesson for him about depending too much on his own artistic instincts. A director at the theater (Meyer Gersht) summarized the prevailing mood with the comment, transcribed by the NKVD, that “the Resolution is at root correct. We are obliged to stage *Eugene Onegin*. I expect that the history of this spectacle will be identical to that of *The Heroic Warriors*.”³⁵

The history was not quite identical. The Committee on Arts Affairs, guardian of the official Pushkin legacy, relieved Tairov and his employees of the obligation to stage *Eugene Onegin*. The disappointment manifested itself in different ways: Tairov avoided all mention of the project in his future writings; Krzhizhanovsky continued his principled journey into obscurity, piecing together an existence by writing encyclopedia articles, consulting on screenplays, and delivering lectures. In 1939, he belatedly became a member of the Union of Soviet Writers. In honor of his fiftieth birthday, a collection of his short stories went to press, but wartime deprivations prevented its publication. Prokofiev reused much of the music of *Eugene Onegin* in the opera *The Duenna*, the second movement of the Eighth Piano Sonata, the ballet *Cinderella*, the Seventh Symphony, and the opera *War and Peace*. (For example, the waltz that accompanies Onegin’s encounter with Tatyana in the dream scene recurs in scene 2 of the opera, where it once again denotes transient passions.)³⁶ Transcending setbacks, Prokofiev would likewise recycle some of the music from the ill-fated *Queen of Spades* and *Boris Godunov* projects. These scores express the same reverence for—and resistance to—a nineteenth-century operatic model.

The Queen of Spades

Pushkin’s thirty-three-page short story *The Queen of Spades* has been the subject of numerous transpositions, the best known being Chaikovsky’s proto-Symbolist opera of 1890. There exist two completed silent film versions, dating from 1910 and 1916, and seven completed sound film versions (five Soviet, one German, and one French), whose relationship to the opera ranges from independent to dependent.³⁷ Director Mikhaïl Romm’s film, one of a handful of unrealized adaptations, sought to distance itself from the opera. The extant records indicate that the director intended to highlight those stylistic features of Pushkin’s story that Chaikovsky’s opera had ignored: its tense, rapid pacing, caustic insights, and detached, analytic mode of narration.

Romm was not alone in the effort (in 1935, for example, Meyerhold staged a re-Pushkinized version of Chaikovsky's opera at Malegot, the Leningrad Maliy Opera Theater), but he was unique in seeking to untangle the relationship between Pushkin and Chaikovsky. Anatoly Vishevsky notes in this regard that "the line" between the story and the opera "blurred" in the twentieth century "and at times has disappeared completely." Vishevsky adds that "a number of educated Russians would be surprised to learn that the Winter Canal . . . does not appear in Pushkin's story, [and] that the words 'three cards, three cards' . . . are also not to be found there."³⁸ In his film version of *The Queen of Spades*, Romm endeavored to sever the story from its operatic adaptations by enlisting Prokofiev to write largely unsentimental music for it.

It is no small irony that, in an effort to make his film version of *The Queen of Spades* faithful to Pushkin, Romm enlisted a composer who would make it faithful to Dostoevsky. Prokofiev had earlier based an opera on Dostoevsky's quasi-autobiographical casino drama *The Gambler*. The style of Dostoevsky's prose differs wholesale from Pushkin's, as does the style of Prokofiev's music from Chaikovsky's. Both the libretto and the music of *The Gambler* represent the casino as a prison whose inhabitants less sing than speak—habitually a sign, in the world of opera, of deformation. Continuous arioso lends unstoppable momentum to the drama. And unlike Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, which terminates with a decisive invocation of malevolent, apocalyptic fate, Prokofiev's *The Gambler* does not appear to end at all. The winner at the casino (Aleksey) emerges as the loser, consigned to eternity at the roulette wheel. Prokofiev does not quote from *The Gambler* in his score for *The Queen of Spades*, but in addition to the general topic of gaming, the two works share, in their rhythmic language, an obsession with obsessive behavior.

In his memoirs, which date from 1948–51 and 1968–69, Romm recalled that he intended his film to be "maximally realistic" and "psychologically justified," an approach that justified his own departures from the source text.³⁹ In Pushkin's story, the protagonist Hermann is rationally opposed to gambling: he wants perfect odds, a guarantee that he will win. In the film, however, he suffers bouts of irrationality. The gravity of his condition becomes clear halfway through the film, when what he thinks is a ghost appears in his quarters to provide a magical three-card formula for reaping unprecedented profits at the casino. Pushkin leaves it perfectly unclear as to whether or not the ghost is an external apparition. But Romm sought to

ascribe the specter to the internal night terrors of a “schizophrenic.”⁴⁰ The three-card formula (3, 7, ace) remains a crucial feature of the plot. Hermann wins at the casino with the first and second of these cards, but loses when the final card he bids, an ace—which he has seen and chosen consciously—turns into the queen of spades. The shock from this event hastens his descent into madness. The harbinger in the film for the tragedy is not the middle ghost scene but the early barracks scene, which shows Hermann passing time alone playing faro. He deals right and left and by chance lays out the 3, 7, and ace cards. Later, one of his companions, Count Tomsy, regales him with a fable about an octogenarian Countess who gambled herself into near-ruin during her wild Parisian youth. As he tells the tale, Tomsy pantomimes the action at a casino, placing, again by chance, the 3, 7, and ace cards face up on the table (the other cards remain face down). Recognizing the combination, Hermann becomes fixated on it. He tells himself that he will be able to “treble” and “septuple” (rather than “double” and “quadruple”) his savings by betting 37,000 rubles on the cards. Romm points out that, in Chaikovsky’s opera, Hermann bets the nonsymbolic amount of 40,000 rubles.⁴¹

Beyond mental illness, the film, had it been completed, would have explored the disparities in Russian aristocratic society. In the original, Hermann woos the ward of the Countess in hopes of learning the three-card formula. The ward, Liza, falls in love with him and grants him access to her room, which also allows him access to the Countess’s bedchamber, where he lies in wait for the old woman’s return from a ball. Upon her arrival, Hermann beseeches her for the formula, threatening her with an unloaded gun when she refuses to provide it. The Countess suffers a fatal heart attack. Merely a semblance of these events occurs in Romm’s film, and they are filtered through what he called “social analysis.”⁴² Romm expressed fascination with the final lines of Pushkin’s text, which recount that Liza survived her experience with Hermann—she did not commit suicide in sentimentalist, Karamzinian fashion, as Chaikovsky has her do—to wed the son of the Countess’s steward. Pushkin refers to these figures in passing to round off his story; Romm created actual parts for them in the film. In contrast to the Countess, who stands for the “growing impoverishment” of the “patrimonial aristocracy,” the steward and his son stand for the “rising and expanding petit bourgeois class.”⁴³ Romm justifies his approach by misleadingly claiming that Pushkin, despite being of noble lineage, considered himself to be petit bourgeois.⁴⁴ The director represents Hermann as a socially marginalized figure and condemns him for indulging his obsession, for trusting in

chance. Pushkin does just the opposite, reproving Hermann for seeking to fix the rules of the game.

Although Romm's approach to Pushkin's story might have a political subtext, it also attests to his abiding interest in the plight of the outcast. His films teem with hardened antiheroes. His first film, *Dumpling* (*Pishka*, 1934), a silent version of Guy de Maupassant's 1880 story "Boule de Suif," addresses the treatment of the downtrodden by supposed people of honor. It takes place during the Franco-Prussian War. The downtrodden figure in this instance is an overweight prostitute who, despite being shunned by the passengers sharing a stagecoach with her, twice protects them, first by providing them with food, then by performing the repulsive deed with a Prussian officer who allows the stagecoach to cross Prussian lines. A later film, *The Dream* (*Mechta*, 1941), depicts the insect-like existence of the residents and employees of an oppressive boarding house. The ideological dimension of this film emerges at the end, when the Polish town where events unfold is liberated by the Soviets. Both films, considered cinematic masterworks, share with the unrealized *The Queen of Spades* a focus on human psychology and destiny, explored within claustrophobic spaces.

The Queen of Spades was to have distinguished itself stylistically through an emphasis on pantomime. To preserve the precision and terseness of Pushkin's story while also enhancing its psychological dimension, Romm sought to exploit mutable light and shadow effects; he also planned to make the film, in whole or in part, in color. The details come from a February 11, 1937, interview between Romm and the editors of the newspaper *Kino*. "*The Queen of Spades*," the director declared, "will be shot using the tricolor method. This poses an even more serious challenge than usual—ensuring an authentic, realistic style for the sets and costumes." To avoid turning the film into the kind of "cheap print" produced by Western filmmakers (here Romm may be referring to the 1935 tricolor film *Becky Sharp*), "the entire figurative, visual component of [*The Queen of Spades*] needs to be made at the highest artistic level."⁴⁵ To reach this level, Romm scripted entire scenes in wordless pantomime—a favorite device.⁴⁶

Romm enlisted Eduard Pentslin to co-write the scenario of *The Queen of Spades* in the fall of 1934 and Prokofiev to compose the music in the spring of 1936. The circumstances behind the commission are unclear. The composer mentions it in a March 7, 1936, article in *Gazeta Polska*;⁴⁷ the actual contract, however, dates from May 29.⁴⁸ Romm began work on *The Queen of Spades* simultaneously with *Anka*, another uncompleted film, but a

creative dispute with the scenarist of the latter placed his position at Mosfilm in jeopardy. Boris Shumyatsky, the head of the State Cinema Directorate (Gosudarstvennoye upravleniye kinomatografii) recommended his reassignment from Moscow to the Tajikistan city of Stalinabad (now Dushanbe). Romm successfully petitioned the Central Committee to be allowed to remain in Moscow, after which he agreed to co-write the scenario for *The Commander* (*Komandir*). Romm took pride in this project, which boasted “psychological” as well as “lyric-dramatic and even epic elements,” but to his frustration, the deputy director (soon to be acting director) of Mosfilm, Yelena Sokolovskaya, rejected it.⁴⁹ The decision precipitated a disastrous falling out between the two. Romm thereafter accepted the commission to realize a Soviet version of the American film *The Lost Patrol*, a 1934 John Ford adventure about a British cavalry regiment stranded and surrounded by unseen enemies in the Mesopotamian desert. The scenario for the film, *The Thirteen* (*Trinadtsat'*), was approved in the spring of 1936, after which Romm traveled with crew and cast to the scorching sands of Turkmenistan to shoot it.

Following the release of the epic on May 8, 1937, Romm returned to the camera obscura world of *The Queen of Spades*. He chose Boris Poslavsky for the role of Hermann and his own wife and lead actress Yelena Kuzmina for the role of Liza. A June 4, 1937, notice in *Kino* states that the casting and sketches for the sets and costumes were scheduled for completion on September 1, 1937.⁵⁰ A June 28 follow-up notice carped that most of the films for the Pushkin centennial had been “made in haste, which excludes the possibility of serious work. *The Queen of Spades*, to the contrary, has been ‘heading into production’ at Mosfilm studios for three years now, without a single frame being shot.”⁵¹

No sooner had work on the film finally resumed than Romm’s dispute with Sokolovskaya flared anew, the result being his forced transfer from Moscow to Kiev. And no sooner had he relocated to Kiev than Shumyatsky summoned him back to Moscow to work on a project that none of the other directors in his employ wanted to take on: the first biographical film about Lenin. The deadline was firm and the pressure enormous: Romm was told that he needed to complete the film, titled *Lenin in October* (*Lenin v Oktyabre*), in four months.⁵² (Bureaucratic trepidation would reduce the shooting schedule to a frantic two months and twenty days.) According to his memoirs, Romm accepted the challenge with Herculean gusto and received the coveted Order of Lenin for completing it to the satisfaction of Stalin and his aides, who viewed

it on November 6, a day before its official opening at a Bolshoy Theater gala.⁵³ Romm relished his triumph over Sokolovskaya, who was arrested in 1937 as part of a purge of the film industry. Shumyatsky disappeared a year later.

These events took place a year after Prokofiev had peacefully completed the music for *The Queen of Spades* in Polenovo. He finished the piano score on July 12, 1936, and then dispatched it to Lamm for copying and, because he was traveling, safekeeping. Lamm completed the copy (designated a *klavierusluga*, a “service piano score”) sometime between July 16 and 26, 1936, and forwarded it, through Myaskovsky, to Mosfilm. The piano score contains twenty-four concise numbers, with Prokofiev indicating the shot sequences to which each pertains.⁵⁴ Here and there in the manuscript, he offers Romm advice about coordinating the music with the visuals in the film. In the margin above No. 18 in the score (“Hermann makes a note, conceals it, and comes to the casino”), which pertains to shot sequence 568–90, Prokofiev comments: “If the excerpt is too long, a cut can be made in the middle, at measures 17–24, for example.” In the margin beside No. 20 in the score (“Hermann goes to the casino a second time”), which pertains to shot sequence 624–29, Prokofiev adds: “I think the music should end when Hermann takes the glass of lemonade [stakan limonada]—or earlier—so that there will be a sufficient break before his next appearance.” (As in the source text, Hermann is a teetotaler.)

Prokofiev played through the score for Romm shortly after it was drafted. The director found the music neither “dramatic” nor “lyrical” but as obsessive as piano studies: “three and then seven pitches repeat endlessly,” which gave the film the barrenness, the “aridity” it needed.⁵⁵ Prokofiev, who told Romm that he considered Chaikovsky’s *The Queen of Spades* to be “in very bad taste,” depicted Hermann’s torments with music that neither recalls nor reflects on events, but simply pushes them forward.⁵⁶ Rather than working with the number format, Prokofiev worked with numbers. Myaskovsky played through the score himself before leaving it with the studio and, like the director, considered it “successful.” But he wondered why “the opening chords of the overture” did not recur in the score. “Why the wasteful extravagance?” he ribbed Prokofiev.⁵⁷ There is, in fact, no such extravagance. Although the opening chords do not recur in their original guise, they serve as the basis of the agitated ostinato patterns that begin in the eighth measure of the overture and do not relent, with modest exception, until the penultimate scene, in which Hermann, glowing from his winnings on the first and second card, loses everything on the third.

The opening comprises seven chords organized in two groups of three; the seventh, which concludes the phrase, establishes the key of B-flat minor (associated with Hermann) and is held under a fermata. The first three chords are triads as are the fifth and final ones. The others are minor-seventh chords, with the first built on the dominant of B-flat minor, and the second built on the mediant. Following the fermata, the first in a series of ostinato patterns is unleashed. It begins in quarter notes and then moves into sixteenths, with the three constituent pitches repeated seven times each. In subsequent passages, Prokofiev generates ostinato patterns out of three- and seven-pitch groups that highlight the interval of the major and minor third. His relentless emphasis on harmonic, intervallic, and rhythmic patterns of three and seven indicates—in calculated, empirical form—the anxious thoughts and repetitive behaviors of what would now be called obsessive compulsive disorder. The ostinato also signals that the Countess's ghost is neither a supernatural apparition nor an intoxicated hallucination but something psychological. The music he creates for her "visit" (No. 17) builds upon a preexisting ostinato pattern that defines the interval of the minor tenth on its initial ascents and the interval of the minor third on its subsequent descents. The pattern grows in strength over the course of the episode to become a musical simulacrum of palpitations. The melody around which the accompaniment wraps outlines the interval of the seventh three times, first falling from D sharp to E, then from C to D flat, and then rising by minor and major third from G to F.

Liza's melody, first introduced in No. 4 ("Liza"), is noteworthy for its absence of rhythmic regularity and its reliance on the tritone as well as the characteristic Russian Romance (or salon song) interval of the sixth. Although cast in C major, the melody features destabilizing, disquieting F sharps. No. 7 ("Hermann sees Liza") includes a variation of the melody in the key of E major—this being a tritone removed from Hermann's B-flat minor. Another variation occurs in the music for the third and final casino scene. Prokofiev transforms the melody into a cadential gesture that falls in half and quarter notes from the dominant to the leading tone of C major. The cadence is thwarted by march-like iterations of a D-flat-major chord in the inner lines of the accompaniment: the outer pitches of the chord resolve downward by a half step, but the middle pitch, F, does not. The cadential gesture sounds a second and then a third time, but the feeling of grinding non-resolution persists, forming an ironic correlate to Pushkin's devastating words "the game took its course" (*igra poshla svoim cheredom*).⁵⁸ Hermann's collapse at the

gaming table is marked not by the appearance of the mocking specter of the Countess, as in Chaikovsky's opera, but by a recollection of squandered love. It is not the three-card formula but Liza who obsesses him at the end.

Perhaps because Lamm was unavailable, Prokofiev enlisted Derzhanovsky to orchestrate the score. Derzhanovsky completed twenty of the twenty-four numbers. The handwriting on the undated, fifty-six-page manuscript is slipshod, seemingly a product of haste.⁵⁹ It wittingly or unwittingly bears the traces of the abrupt manner in which work on the film was resumed, curtailed, resumed again, and then curtailed again between 1936 and 1938. In December 1937, having survived the upheavals at Mosfilm, Romm relocated to Leningrad to begin shooting *The Queen of Spades*. The part of Hermann was reassigned from Poslavsky to a local stage actor. The outdoor scenes were shot in January and February, leaving the spring (March through June) to shoot the indoor scenes. Sometime after March 23, 1938—the precise date is unknown—the chairman of the newly formed Committee on Cinema Affairs (Komitet po delam kinomatografii), Semyon Dukelsky, called Romm to his office to break the news that work on the film would be terminated: the Committee had opted to cancel films based on classical subjects in favor of more topical fare. According to a March 14 memorandum submitted by Dukelsky to Molotov at Sovnarkom, the films then in production failed to fulfill the “thematic plan” that the State Cinema Directorate had devised in advance for them. Historical, anti-fascistic, and children's films were being made at the expense of those concerning, among other things, the life of the peoples of the Union, the Red Army, and the struggle against religion.⁶⁰ Romm protested the cancellation to Dukelsky, but the chairman held firm: “I don't understand you!” he bellowed at the persistent director. “Why are you always grieving *The Queen of Spades*—and thinking about three cards, three cards, three cards! If I were in your shoes I'd be happy. What don't you have? Money? You have it! Fame? You have it! Your films are even shown abroad. You have an apartment! What else do you need?”⁶¹

Thus ended Romm's third try—his third bid—to realize *The Queen of Spades*. In despair, he destroyed the scenario, most of the historical materials that had been gathered for him by an assistant, the costume sketches, and the photographs. The fate of the unedited footage is unclear, though it is presumed lost. Romm lamented not only the forfeiture of his own labor, but also that of his actors. The Committee on Cinema Affairs, meanwhile, was left to account for the squandering of more than 750,000 rubles on an unmade film. No record of Prokofiev's response to the cancellation of

The Queen of Spades has emerged to date. He acknowledged reusing material from the Liza-related passages in the first movement of his Eighth Piano Sonata, but he also did so in the third movement of his Fifth Symphony.⁶² As always, he transferred melodic and harmonic ideas from one score to another without lamenting their decontextualization. Their essence remained intact, he believed, withstanding the manipulation that produced only a derivation of the inviolate musical idea, considered to be constant, eternal. Even within the score of *The Queen of Spades* itself, melodic and harmonic ideas assume different guises. They are no less mutable than the three-card formula.

Boris Godunov

Of the aborted Pushkin projects, the most conceptually complicated was Meyerhold's staging of *Boris Godunov*. Set between 1598 and 1605, the drama concerns the crisis-ridden reign of a tsar who came to be considered illegitimate and the challenge mounted against him by a pretender to the throne. Meyerhold intended to premiere *Boris Godunov* at the very start of the Pushkin centennial celebration of 1937, but political problems both inside and outside his theater forced him to delay and eventually to cancel the staging.⁶³ His contribution to the centennial consisted instead of a concert performance, in February 1937, of the realist composer Dargomizhsky's 1869 setting of Pushkin's *The Stone Guest* (1830).⁶⁴ Meyerhold returned to *Boris Godunov* in March and April but, after a few rehearsals, abandoned it for good. His provocative plans for the drama, which he had developed in consultation with Prokofiev, were consigned to oblivion.

Given the level of apprehension and claustrophobia in the Russian capital, staging a drama about a Russian leader haunted by questions of legitimacy and plagued by real-or-imagined threats was ill advised, to say the least. In April 1937, the drama was removed from the repertoire of the Moscow Arts Theater on Molotov's order.⁶⁵ This was the same month that Meyerhold abandoned work on it. Eight months later, he came under direct political attack in the pages of *Pravda*.⁶⁶ Kerzhentsev thereafter signed a decree ordering the closure of his theater.⁶⁷ As discussed in chapter 2, the director both anticipated this event and prepared himself psychologically for the worst. Perversely, Kerzhentsev's downfall did nothing to prevent his own.

Meyerhold's adopted daughter Tatyana Esenina argues that Meyerhold began work on *Boris Godunov* long before he knew he was in trouble. She also argues that his staging was intended as a critique of the Stalinist regime.

The director sought with the drama to defend his modernist directorial technique—which ran counter to official artistic doctrine—and to protest, through none-too-subtle allegory, the advent of malevolent totalitarian rule. To support her assertion, Esenina refers to the scene 9 monologue in *Boris Godunov* weighing the uses and abuses of absolute power. Pushkin assigned the monologue to his quasi-fictionalized distant relative Afanasiy Pushkin, a foe of Godunov and incidental character in the drama, but one to whom Meyerhold devoted extensive attention in the rehearsals.⁶⁸ Esenina recalls that the actors involved did not understand why the director considered this monologue so important. In later years, she set out to find the answer:

What needs explaining here? It was 1936, the time of the infamous open trials. I was abroad; I knew what was being written over there. Even we were whispering. The means of fighting for power were monstrous, though Stalin himself did not slink out of his office and stoke the pyres with his poker. Afanasiy Pushkin's monologue hit the bull's-eye. Spoken from the stage, it would have been like Hamlet's "Mousetrap." Years later I read the brilliant pages written by [Meyerhold's colleague Aleksandr] Gladkov about the rehearsals of the scene [10] at Shuysky's house. This was when Meyerhold, demonstrating how Pushkin's monologue should be read, leapt onto a table, flying into a rage that became a total frenzy. When he finished the monologue, he did not stop; over one hundred and twenty more lines poured out from him. These were improvised.⁶⁹

This statement is complicated, to be sure, with Esenina equating Pushkin-the-author with Shakespeare and Pushkin-the-character with Hamlet, moving on to discuss a tempestuous rehearsal. To shore up her point about the ominous political subtext of *Boris Godunov*, moreover, Esenina quotes from Pushkin's text. The phrase "Stalin himself did not slink out of his office and stoke the pyres with his poker" derives from the opening section of the scene 9 monologue:

Such uproar, that Tsar Boris will hardly
Retain the crown on his clever head.
And it serves him right! He rules us

Like Tsar Ivan (may his name not be invoked at night).
What does it matter that public executions have ceased,
That we do not sing the canons to Jesus
On bloodstained stakes, for all to see,
That they do not burn us in the squares, and that the Tsar
himself
Does not *stoke the pyres with his poker*?⁷⁰

According to Esenina, Meyerhold wanted to represent Boris—and by extension Stalin—as behind-the-scenes instigators of historical processes that spiral out of their control. Despite her close relationship to Meyerhold, however, her interpretation contradicts the information found in the rehearsal transcripts. From these and other documents, it emerges that the staging had much broader artistic, political, and psychological concerns than Esenina indicates. Rather than conflating the evils of the early seventeenth century with those of the mid-twentieth century, the available evidence suggests that Meyerhold and Prokofiev intended to depict Russian rulers as impotent and, more generally, human striving as purposeless. Theirs was to have been a drama of primal forces and melancholy wanderers, a rumination transcending time and place. The rehearsal transcripts reveal that the Russian people, rather than their overseers, were to have occupied the secret space behind the scenes.

Meyerhold became obsessed with *Boris Godunov* long before he met Prokofiev, and this obsession was both a source of pleasure and torment for him. Although he regarded Pushkin's account of the rise, suffering, and fall of the infamous tsar as an ideal vehicle for testing new directorial methods, his efforts to stage the drama essentially came to naught. Indeed, the story of Meyerhold's involvement with *Boris Godunov* is one of almost constant disappointment. Productions were rehearsed and then abandoned because of practical problems, Meyerhold's uncertainties as to interpretation, and creative disputes with members of his troupes.

Even his lone success with the drama was partial. In 1911, Meyerhold had participated in a production of Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* opera at the Mariinsky Theater in St. Petersburg. The libretto brought together both Pushkin's interpretation of the run-up to the Time of Troubles and that of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historian Karamzin. However legendary the staging of this opera, it did not allow Meyerhold to bring his modernist technique directly to bear on Pushkin. In 1918, as St. Petersburg

endured the Revolution, Meyerhold published a directorial plan for an experimental production of *Boris Godunov* that he had developed in collaboration with a group of his own theater students. During the civil war (when Meyerhold was briefly imprisoned by the Whites), he turned to the drama anew, developing an independent directorial plan that reconciled Pushkin's stylistic dialogue with his Western theatrical models. This plan guided the rehearsals that he started in 1924 for a staging of *Boris Godunov* at the Vakhtangov Studio Theater in Moscow. Casting difficulties forced the director to shelve the project, but in 1934, Meyerhold came back to it one last time. He was by now desperate to perform it and vowed to do so—with his own troupe and in his own theater—in the spring of 1937.⁷¹ This never came to pass.

It is unclear how the drama would have looked on stage, unfortunately, and how Meyerhold would have used physical gesture to represent the historical highlights of Pushkin's drama: the ascent of Boris Godunov to the throne, the social crises that accompanied his reign, the persistent rumors that he had murdered the Rurikovich heir (Ivan the Terrible's son, the Tsarevich Dmitriy), and the appearance of the alleged pretender to the throne (an obscure figure, Grigoriy Otrepiyev, masquerading as the reincarnation of the Tsarevich Dmitriy). The rehearsal transcripts reveal, however, that Meyerhold wanted the acting to be energetic, even muscular, with certain scenes overlapping and the décor in constant motion. The barriers between auditorium and stage were to be eliminated, making the audience feel a part of the action; the actors would move between platforms via ramps, faces would appear in holes punched out in the walls, and indecipherable chatter would be heard from the wings. The acting, like the music, was to possess an element of lightness—but of a dispiriting, disturbing sort. Meyerhold told his cast: "With *Boris* it is very easy to fall into iconicity and sweetness, but this drains the blood from the images and text. Lightness does not mean bloodlessness."⁷²

The initial meetings with the actors centered on improving their knowledge of poetic meter. The poet Vladimir Pyast, an expert on declamation, prepared a rhythmic and stylistic analysis of Pushkin's lines that specified "pauses, caesuras, accents" and "rises and falls" in vocal intonation.⁷³ In November 1935, Pyast provided Meyerhold with an analysis of a scene that Pushkin had in fact excised from his published version, titled "At the Monastery Wall (The Evil Monk)." It provides an explanation for Grigoriy's decision to masquerade as the incarnation of the murdered tsarevich.

Far from deciding his destiny on his own, the restless, adventure-seeking Grigoriy heeds external advice. Apparently deciding that this episode was thematically out of sync with the rest of the drama, Pushkin excluded it from the 1831 edition.⁷⁴ Pyast, however, was smitten with it and urged Meyerhold to insert it into his performance. The unholy monk, Pyast proposed, could visit Grigoriy as he slept, haunt his dreams, and, through the power of suggestion, lead him down the path of temptation. To this description of events, Pyast added the following thoughts:

I even propose staging the “excluded” scene with the “Evil Monk” either as the last or, at the very least, the penultimate one. Not in the form of a whole scene, but if it is the last one, as an epilogue on the proscenium and, if it is the penultimate one, then as an intermezzo. Not with full décor, and if possible in the form of voices that “accumulate” from somewhere behind the scenes, voices saturated with oppressively rhythmical music. In the form of the tortuous dream of [the False] Dmitriy, who lies somewhere on the proscenium—his nightmare when he was about to become, or had already become, the tsar, his nightmare about the evil monk, who perhaps never existed.⁷⁵

Persuaded by Pyast’s argument, Meyerhold decided, in accordance with the original 1825 version of Pushkin’s drama, to stage the exchange between Grigoriy and the monk after the nighttime episode involving Grigoriy and the hermit Pimen (scene 5 in the 1831 version) and before the daytime episode in the Patriarch’s quarters (scene 6). Pyast reasoned that staging the appearance of the “Evil Monk” as a dream would solve a technical problem: the scene has a different verse structure (trochaic octometer) than the rest of the drama (iambic pentameter).⁷⁶

Upon rearranging the text, Meyerhold enlisted Prokofiev to write incidental music, stressing (perhaps with Prokofiev’s demon-filled opera *The Fiery Angel* in mind) that the score should involve a generous dose of acoustic *diablerie*.⁷⁷ In November 1936, Prokofiev completed a score for the drama that contained a half-Eastern, half-Western military tattoo, drunken singing, ballroom dancing, a reverie, and an amoroso characteristic of Hollywood melodrama. He framed these passages with their emotional inversions: a widow’s lament, a sing-along for blind beggars, three behind-the-scenes choruses,

and four songs of loneliness. As in Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Prokofiev's score includes a poignant song for a bedraggled Holy Fool, who in a state of near-narcosis sings of the moonlight and a kitten's cry. Prokofiev suspended work on the score after completing twenty-four numbers; it is clear from his correspondence with Meyerhold, however, that he had planned on penning two more items, one for the Pretender's restless dreams, and another for the fortune-tellers who encircle and besiege Boris in his quarters. (The second item could have been improvised, since it involved onstage noisemakers: drums, sticks, bongos, and rattles. Prokofiev did not actually believe that the scene in question needed music, but Meyerhold wanted it to exude what he called the "jazz" of the sixteenth century.)⁷⁸

Much of the score attests to Meyerhold's interest in expressing the profound isolation of the political elite of Russian history, the disregard of the masses for their striving, and the indifference of the cosmos to their sorrows. In accord with a central conceit of Pushkin's text, solitude became the structural dominant of the rehearsals. As Caryl Emerson explains, Pushkin "advocated neither Individuals nor the People as 'subjects of history' or 'heroes of drama'; they were the subjects and heroes only of their own personal fates."⁷⁹ This sense of self-willed entrapment, of being boxed up in the dramatic equivalent of a peep show, became a point of focus in Meyerhold and Prokofiev's collaboration.

On November 16, 1936, Prokofiev played through the piano score of his incidental music for *Boris Godunov* before a gathering of the actors involved in the staging. By all accounts, his score was rapturously received, with Meyerhold hailing the terse directness of Prokofiev's music. In his opinion, it accorded with the sentiments of Pushkin's text and filtered out its Musorgskian associations. Together, the director and composer sought to "return Pushkin to Pushkin," restoring the "sense of immediacy, intimacy, and risk that had been lost through the poet's canonization and the monumentalization of Musorgsky's opera."⁸⁰ The anxiety of Musorgskian influence lies not in the content of the incidental music to the drama but in what the incidental music leaves out. There are no discordant chimes, prolonged arioso death scenes, or text-based choruses in Prokofiev's score.

The director and the composer also endeavored to exaggerate the fragmentariness of *Boris Godunov*. Pushkin's characters are out of sync with one another: they speak in different rhythms and occupy different points on the time and space continua. This is clearest—and most comic—in the battle scene (scene 17), which Meyerhold strenuously praised. The battle

is a polyglot jamboree in which the Tsar's "Asiatic" troops (represented by an octatonic pitch array), Grigoriy's "Western" troops, and some German mercenaries who side with the Tsar are in combat. Hilariously cast by Pushkin in French, German, and Russian, the three ensembles clash rhythmically and syntactically. Meyerhold noted that, in Prokofiev's conception, the identities of the Russian and non-Russian forces become pointedly confused. Boris's identity crises—the concerns about his authenticity and background—have been internationalized. "You just heard today the success Prokofiev had with the battle scene. Why do you think he succeeded?" Meyerhold asked after the November audition of the music. "Because he approached that scene with Pushkin's naiveté. Here you have a group of Western warriors imported by Grigoriy, a group of Asiatic warriors imported by Boris Godunov, and some Germans. He portrays this battle naively."⁸¹

The battle scene in *Boris Godunov* bears little resemblance to those in other Prokofiev scores, where sleigh bells and major-key fanfares confirm that victory for the Russians is assured, that the fight is over before it even begins.⁸² Such is their nature in *Alexander Nevsky*, a film that served to mobilize the Soviet people for military conflict with the Nazis. *Boris Godunov*, however, does not rewrite history for propagandistic purposes. Instead, it mocks history. Prokofiev lampoons the three groups in their squabble over Eastern European territory by bringing them down to the same base level, by depicting them not as flesh-and-blood people but mere silhouettes.

Beyond the battle scene, the most striking music of the score comes in the middle dance scenes, whose polonaise and mazurka bear the influence of Chaikovsky. (Prokofiev, as noted, criticized portions of Chaikovsky's settings of *Eugene Onegin* and *The Queen of Spades*, but he nevertheless derived inspiration from them.) These dances, which served as preparatory studies for the ballroom numbers in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, stand out for their sheer sonic exuberance. Owing to their agogic accents and suspensions across the bar line, they assume a slightly artificial, fantastic feel. Can one dance to such music? The sensation washes over the listener that the polonaise and mazurka are the products of delusion or dream, the acoustic tensions and releases intended for unnatural bodies. Indeed, the characters in *Boris Godunov* make no apparent effort to dance. In scene 12, which is set (like scene 13) at the Polish castle of the *voyevod* Mnishek, dance music is heard down a corridor lined with bright but unseen rooms, in and out of which couples stroll, rather than whirl.⁸³

Prokofiev's *Boris Godunov* is an unusual score, going well beyond the composer's supposedly "modest" goals for his incidental music to offer much more than background atmosphere. The vocal music especially draws attention to itself, often telling a different story than the text. The composer conflates acoustic registers, bringing together, for example, duets and solo songs from the visible story space (the diegetic realm) and choruses from the invisible space beyond it (the nondiegetic realm). Yet the juxtaposition does not serve the purpose of dialogue; the onstage singing involves words (in the duets) and vocalized vowels (in the solo songs), but the offstage singing does not. During the monologues, Prokofiev works with two other types of sound. The first is imagined or, to use a term developed by the film scholar Claudia Gorbman, "meta-diegetic" sound: that which exists in the Tsar's and Pretender's multidimensional consciousnesses but which the audience is also permitted to hear.⁸⁴ The second type of sound is harder to define, since it is displaced in time, leaking into the present from the past or the future or both. The phenomenon might be likened to metempsychosis insofar as it concerns the transmigration of consciousness or, in the case of Kseniya's scene 10 lament, the transmigration of spirit.

Scene 10 opens with Kseniya grieving the death of her betrothed (an outpouring that worsens the Tsar's already terrible mood) and closes with the Tsar grieving the real-or-imagined enemies knocking (metaphorically speaking) at his door. The transcripts of Meyerhold's rehearsals from December 4 and 13, 1936, explain his intentions and shed light on the marriage of Pushkin's words to Prokofiev's background scoring. During the December 4 rehearsal, the director remarked that, despite the lack of "sentimentality" in scene 10, "a tone of sincerity must come from Kseniya." Since her bridegroom "did not die yesterday, but quite a long time ago, she will not weep now as she did on the day after his death. The expression of her sorrow must thus subside, though its ritual aspect must still be audible." By way of clarification, the director offered a personal anecdote, describing his experience at the funeral of the peasant poet Sergey Esenin. As Esenin's mother approached the coffin, he recalled, she began a ritual lament that exhibited vocal "technique," involving the hypnotic repetition of a familiar melody, one whose intonations offer her consolation. During the December 13 rehearsal, Meyerhold commented that the "egocentric" Tsar does not interpret his daughter's sorrow as an expression of personal loss; it is instead a generalized utterance, "the nation's lament."⁸⁵ The contemplative, introspective lament involves not one voice but many singing a single strain

that repeats over and over again. The imaginative listener might interpret the sound—which is specifically associated with the Time of Troubles—as allegory for sorrowful recurrences in Russian history.

To convert a personal expression into a communal one, Prokofiev composed an eleven-measure piece that evokes the intonations of liturgical chant and thus refers to long-standing ritual. The ritual in question is a construct insofar as Prokofiev's music has no explicit connections to Russian chant of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but takes as its point of reference later, post-Petrine concepts of liturgical modality and melody, such as that embodied in Rachmaninoff's *All-Night Vigil*. Kseniya sings amid a halo of strings. The first violins introduce a throbbing motive—a rising and falling minor third—which is adopted and embellished by the singer against a backdrop of rocking whole steps and semitones in the second violins. Gazing at an image of her lost betrothed, Kseniya grieves: "Why do your lips no longer speak, and your bright eyes no longer shine? Why are your lips sealed, your bright eyes set?" The peak of her melodic arch, on the word "bright," is marked by the insertion of F flat, D flat, and C flat in both the vocal and instrumental music—a literal flattening of the C-minor texture. By drawing upon the music of the background accompaniment, Kseniya imports nondiegetic sound into the diegetic realm, which from a narrative standpoint is the equivalent of transforming omniscient narration into direct speech. Kseniya quotes from a wordless chorus of string instruments; her lament is the lament of mourners before her, moving from the past through the present.

In 1944, Prokofiev included the music of Kseniya's lament in the score for *Ivan the Terrible* Part I. He used it in the scene in which Ivan's wife, Anastasiya, takes to her bed. She has fallen ill and will soon die, since her medicine has been poisoned by a treacherous courtier (Yefrosinya Staritskaya). In this context, Kseniya's lament serves the purpose of a nocturnal vigil. To enhance its emotion, Prokofiev added electronic feedback to the sound of the strings. In *Boris Godunov*, the acoustic extension is achieved not by electronics but by invisible human beings.



Meyerhold defined *Boris Godunov* as "a struggle of passions against the backdrop of a seething sea,"⁸⁶ and throughout the rehearsal period, he equated the behavior of the masses with that of elemental nature. A letter he wrote to Prokofiev about the incidental music for the drama, and the detailed instructions that he inserted between the pages of Prokofiev's personal copy

of the drama, describe the people as the embodiment of fierce meteorological events. In scene 22, Meyerhold sought to divide the sound of the people into two parts: in the first half of the scene, which features a speech about the demise of Boris and the triumphant arrival of the Pretender in Moscow, the people express a combination of “arousal, intensity, electricity”; in the second half, their utterances decay into white noise, the din of “rebellion, the roar of the sea, of a breached dam.”⁸⁷ In his instructions for the final scene in the drama, Meyerhold extends his litany of metaphors. “The rumble of the crowd,” he suggests to Prokofiev, should be

dark, agitated, menacing, like the roar of the sea. One should feel their power growing, being restrained, an internal rage, a ferment that has yet to find an outlet. When their power has grown to the fullest, the people become organized, and nothing can stand against them.⁸⁸

Here at the conclusion of Meyerhold's planned staging, the people (*narod*) are equated with a crowd or throng (*tolpa*)—an instruction that would have appealed to the neo-primitive or “Scythian” side of Prokofiev's musical persona.⁸⁹ It merits mention that in his letter to the composer that preceded these written instructions, Meyerhold commented that, in accordance with the 1831 ending of Pushkin's drama, the noise of the crowd would not be long-lasting and would calm down (*utikhayet*) with Mosalsky's words: “People! Mariya Godunova and her son Fyodor have poisoned themselves.”⁹⁰ The omission of these remarks from his later written instructions to the composer suggests, perhaps, a mutation in his conception of the people from a passive into an aggressive force, from an embodiment of natural forces to the enactment of revolutionary power. He likewise came to argue for an alignment of man and nature, individual and mass, in the staging. Prokofiev, however, conceived not a violent deluge for the end of the drama but a block of sound that repeats insistently from end to end.

Meyerhold's instructions challenged Prokofiev to create a musical structure and language for the crowd scenes that would preserve the individual utterance within the collective or, more to the point, demonstrate that each form of expression enables the other. His response to the challenge was unique, insofar as it involved reducing the three choral episodes in the drama to the barest of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements, and dispensing with words altogether. The three choruses in *Boris Godunov* feature, in the

vocal lines, stammered eighth and quarter notes. These are accompanied by simple three- and four-note chords in the orchestra that repeat in rigid formations, give way to brief chromatic runs, and modulate up and down by whole steps. In terms of texture and dynamic, each of the choruses is cast in binary form, the first halves gradually increasing in density and volume, the second halves decreasing; each also alternates between homophonic and polyphonic passages. The music shuns development, depending instead on abstract patterns of cause and effect to generate meaning. Prokofiev omitted the music for the three choral scenes from the November run-through, but he talked about the general impact he wanted the wordless singing to achieve. "The noise of the crowd," he told the actors, "will be somewhere behind the scenes, the musical premise being as follows: there is a kind of musical foundation, which is accompanied by string bass, bassoon, bass drum, tam-tam, and kettledrums (these last are muted and emit only noise, not specific pitch). The chorus not only sings to this music, but also evokes the multi-voiced rumble of the crowd."⁹¹

These remarks pertain to the first and third choral scenes (Nos. 22 and 24 in the score), which convey a sense of temporal stasis, as though the people are locked in the historical moment, speaking neither to the past nor the future. In No. 24, the chorus that concludes the drama, the singing consists of bass and tenor voices that more often than not move in portentous lock-step. Measures 7 and 8 of the 16-measure repeating structure involve a chromatic run in the bass line that facilitates a modulation from C major to its relative minor, A. In the remaining measures (9–16), the bass line descends by half step from A to E flat; this last note drops to D with the return, following the double-bar sign, to measure 1. The repetition of notes within the formation as well as of the formation itself enhances the sense of stasis, the effect of building but bridled energy.

The first chorus (No. 22) achieves the effect through other means. Prokofiev drafted a series of rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic blocks, arranging them in palindromic fashion. The three measures of block "A" frame the chorus: the unit appears twice in the first ten measures and twice in the last ten measures of the episode. Block "B," which occupies two measures, serves as a second, internal frame, while blocks "C" (two measures) and "D" (three measures) define the center. The structure is not as rigid as a description makes it seem. For one thing, the four vocal-instrumental units are interrupted by passages that do not repeat; for another, the blocks are not always heard intact. The second repetition of block "A," for example,

is missing one of its original measures, and the first repetition of block "D" is missing two. In other words, whereas the overall structure of the chorus is fixed, its internal elements are not: upon repetition, they tend to expand or contract in size. This elasticity, coupled with the changing rhythmic and harmonic relationships in each of the blocks, creates the overall impression of a marshaled cacophony. The chorus is a primal "ferment," to refer back to Meyerhold's instructions to Prokofiev, "that has yet to find an outlet."

For the middle chorus of the three, Prokofiev offered a musical self-analysis, noting that he devised the episode in an unusual fashion so that it could be fragmented and reconfigured to suit the needs of the director.⁹² The chorus consists of a single eight-measure phrase that is transposed, upon repetition, from the tonalities of C to D, D to E, and E to F-sharp major and back down again. The seventh and eighth measures of the phrase facilitate these transpositions, which the composer defined as rises and falls in emotional intensity. To this chorus, Prokofiev added a chance element—a means for expressing primal spontaneity. In the bottom margin of the manuscript, he remarked that the four transpositions of the eight-measure phrase could be "combined as necessary" and performed at various tempos, though he cautioned that the melodic motives he inserted into the E-major transposition of the phrase should not be heard in succession.⁹³ Thus the actual published edition of the chorus, which includes seven repetitions of the phrase in four tonalities, does not reflect how the composer meant for it to be heard. The singing was to be partitioned into discrete blocks, with Meyerhold at liberty to rearrange and distribute them throughout the drama to capture the changing energies of the people. Here it should be noted that Pushkin scholars sometimes describe the narrative organization of *Boris Godunov* as a patchwork, a jumble of brief scenes providing different psychological angles on the same historical incidents. In her 1986 study of the drama, Emerson observes that "instead of a series of interlocking and exemplary life situations, we are given an assemblage of glimpses drawn from different points of view—what one critic [Mark Polyakov] has called 'poly-perspectival drama.'"⁹⁴

Prokofiev's middle chorus is the invisible thread that binds the drama together. Akin to the chorus in a Greek tragedy, the singers inhabit a terrain inaccessible to the major players in Pushkin's text: Boris, Grigoriy, Fyodor, Kseniya, Pimen, and Shuysky. Unlike the commentators in a Greek tragedy, the singers react to the events onstage with wordless outbursts. They "speak" neither from the past nor the future; they do not remember what happened

and cannot describe what will occur. Since history has not benefited the people, the people, it appears, have stepped outside of it.



The lament and choruses constitute two of the three vocal layers of the incidental music for *Boris Godunov*. The third layer, a group of unaccompanied songs, is at once the simplest (in terms of syntax) and most complex (in terms of acoustic manipulation). The songs are heard both on- and offstage; they are sometimes remembered and sometimes imagined by the *dramatis personae*. Meyerhold proposed to distribute the songs “throughout the entire spectacle” and wanted “two or three” of them to exhibit an “Eastern character.”⁹⁵ The first is performed by a melancholy wanderer, a figure who finds himself lost between borders. The “Song of the Lonely Traveler” occurs at the tail end of the scene on the Lithuanian border (No. 8), during which the Pretender Grigoriy takes flight from the Tsar’s lansquenets. The listener, Meyerhold and Prokofiev believed, would equate Grigoriy with this song, even though it is sung (or at least appears to be sung) by someone else.

The “Lonely Traveler”—whose lack of identity reflects the devil-may-care Pretender’s own lack of identity—brings to mind the shepherd from the devastating third act of Richard Wagner’s 1859 *Tristan und Isolde*, which Meyerhold knew well.⁹⁶ Near the start of the act, Tristan awakes from a restless, feverish dream to ask a simple question: “Where am I?” He knows his nightmare is over but cannot bring himself out of it and does not know where he is. Recall that Meyerhold (at Pyast’s urging) wanted his version of *Boris Godunov* to include a scene that Pushkin had omitted from the 1831 edition of his drama, one that involved Grigoriy, like Tristan, experiencing restless, feverish dreams. He declares, following a conversation with the “Evil Monk” who occupies the same room, that his future has been decided: “That’s it! I am Dmitriy, the Tsarevich!”⁹⁷ Unlike Tristan, Grigoriy knows where he is and what he has become, but in Meyerhold’s conception, he gains this knowledge with the assistance of a nocturnal interlocutor. Pushkin signals that Grigoriy is a habitual dreamer, and his egoistic vision in the presence of the monk marks his attempt to realize his most ambitious potential. The incident was to be staged as follows:

The music begins, suggesting—like the delirium of someone in *War and Peace*—a state of pulsation, pulsing. And against the background of this pulsating music, somewhere

in the back behind translucent curtains it begins to get light, the decorations shake and throw light on *him*, next to the monk. He is in the monk's quarters. This is a sickly dream, like a delirium. He enters and speaks, but the actor who plays Dmitriy lies at the front of the stage.

I would entrust this scene not to actors, but to singers. This is not declamation in music, not recitation to music, which I don't like at all, but recitative. This should be done in the style of recitative, as in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.⁹⁸

In addition to recitative, Prokofiev offered to furnish Meyerhold with haunting, unsettled orchestral music for the scene: a throbbing backdrop consisting of leitmotifs from the reverie, polonaise, and mazurka that he composed for later pages in the drama.⁹⁹ The music for the dream scene, in short, would be a melodic congeries from the scene 13 gathering at the Polish castle and the scene 14 meeting between Grigoriy and Marina by the fountain. In a portentous inversion, Grigoriy would not be roused by the sounds of the past, the time and place of his authentic self, but by the sounds of the future, the time and place of his adopted selves. Time in the staging would run both forward and backward. In the "Evil Monk" scene, Meyerhold wanted the Pretender to hear the music of his fragmented destiny. Capable of multiply reinventing himself, he was to experience, in one jarring sequence, a compilation soundtrack of all his potential identities.

Rehearsals for *Boris Godunov* were suspended before the orchestral music for the dream scene came into being, leaving its relationship to the "Song of the Lonely Traveler" unclear. (Prokofiev kept the musical concept in mind, however, when he composed Prince Andrey's "piti-piti" hallucination for *War and Peace*; the episode involves the distant reprise of a waltz and a throbbing offstage chorus.) Perhaps the composer came to the same conclusion about *Boris Godunov* that Pushkin did: the drama needed to avoid the supernatural, since to invoke it would be to ascribe the decisions of the characters to events beyond their control.

In place of the dream music, Prokofiev composed three additional monophonic songs. Like the "Song of the Lonely Traveler," they are cast in the stripped-down style that Meyerhold regarded as the ideal counterpart to the disquieting directness of Pushkin's mode of expression.¹⁰⁰ The original manuscript of the songs reveals that Prokofiev conceived them as a group, with common phrases that could be shuffled around.¹⁰¹ All intone the vowel "ah."

Songs one and two preserve the intervallic contours and cadential patterns associated with the Dorian (or natural minor) mode in both its liturgical and folkloric guises. Songs three and four, in contrast, bear a blank “Eastern” character, a reference, perhaps, to Karamzin’s suggestion that Boris had Asiatic (Tatar-Mongol) ancestors.¹⁰² The third song stresses the lowered second and lowered fifth scale degrees of the Locrian mode and a 9/8 rhythmic pattern that could conceivably have been inspired by the Turkish *Karsilama* and the motions of belly dancers: Prokofiev stacks one exotic cliché atop another. His fourth song involves—in an enharmonic respelling—the familiar “Eastern” interval of the augmented second. The melody ascends from E sharp to E natural, a span of a diminished octave, with the upper pitch repeated in a laconic diminuendo and diminution toward the end. The four songs represent no specific locale but remoteness as such. Prokofiev’s score for *Boris Godunov* begins and ends in this ambiguous space.

The chance-based repetitiveness of the choral singing and the removal of context from the four songs evince calculated simplicity and intentional naiveté. Naiveté is the point at which comedy trips over into tragedy. In Prokofiev’s score for *Boris Godunov* the boundaries of the two modes are probed—and found wanting—to eerie effect. The visible singers allow their unadorned cantilena to bridge the gaps between the scenes. The invisible singers, upon whom Meyerhold and Prokofiev lavished much care in their collaboration, issue their primal sounds from the hinterland, commenting on historic upheaval in a much different way than Pushkin’s verses. Their distanced stammering opens a window into the minds of the Tsar and his rival, who are further and further detached from their handlers, the masses, and from their own previously constructed selves. Moving from the ending to the beginning of the music for *Boris Godunov* (and the ending to the beginning of Meyerhold and Prokofiev’s interaction with Pushkin), one sees that the planned staging filled much greater psychological terrain than the seventeenth-century onset of the Time of Troubles or the twentieth-century onset of the Stalinist repressions.

The rehearsal transcripts for *Boris Godunov* imagine a terrain of unleashed primal forces that obliterate individuality and nationality. It is a much different place from the “alien theater” described by Kerzhentsev in a December 17, 1937, *Pravda* article of the same name.¹⁰³ That article, which accused Meyerhold of ignoring the “fundamental political and creative challenges” confronting the Soviet people in favor of abstraction and experiment, spelled the end of the director’s career and, ultimately, his life. Had he

staged *Boris Godunov*, his political opponents would doubtless have scorned its eccentric bleakness, with comparably dire consequences. Meyerhold was altogether fascinated by the figure of Pimen, whom he described as a very busy historian, someone who, despite a long-standing ban on the writing of chronicles,¹⁰⁴ “has always written,” is “writing at the moment,” and “still has a great deal to write.”¹⁰⁵ This figure is Meyerhold himself, who still had a great deal to write in 1936, despite bans of a different sort and the shackling of his creative activities by Stalin’s cultural servants. Pimen chronicled the erosion of the Russian State; Meyerhold imagined its end. Both feared the void that would be left behind.

DropBooks

War and Evacuation, 1940–1943

In 1938, Prokofiev's home life began to fall apart, the consequence of external pressures and internal disputes. In 1941, he abruptly abandoned Lina and their two sons to live in central Moscow with a twenty-six-year-old poet named Mira (Mariya) Abramovna Mendelson, a student in the Gorky Literary Institute. In the years ahead, Mira became Prokofiev's advisor, guardian of his time and health, and the co-author, with Prokofiev himself, of three opera librettos and several song texts. She took the lead role in preserving his legacy, and represented him in her writings in quasi-hagiographic terms. Her 1940–50 memoirs, a miscellany of personal observations, transcribed letters, and transcribed articles and reviews, contain select, decontextualized details about Prokofiev's day-to-day activities before, during, and after the Second World War. The summaries of their conversations tend to be banal, lacking substance, which suggests that she censored them in an effort to preserve the correct political picture of the relationship.

The two of them first met in August 1938, when Mira traveled with her parents to vacation at the resort in Kislovodsk where Prokofiev and Lina were also residing.¹ Mira pinpoints August 26 as the date of her first conversation with Prokofiev. They began to take walks, during which he spoke of his music and she of her attempts at verse. In an English-language interview, Lina recalls Prokofiev first describing Mira as “just some girl who wants to read me her bad poetry.” Lina joked, “Well, take care of your little admirer.”² Prokofiev defended his subsequent meetings with Mira on professional grounds: she “could help him find Soviet librettos.” “Well, go

ahead and see her," his wife answered, "I won't object; but that doesn't mean you have to live with her!"³ He and Mira parted at the end of August—she returned to Moscow, he detoured to the Black Sea resort of Sochi—but they pledged to remain in contact. Mira was at this point entering the third year of her four-year program of studies, and living with her father, Abram Solomonovich Mendelson, and mother, Vera (Dora) Natanovna Mendelson, in two of the three rooms of a communal apartment across from the Moscow Arts Theater, in a building controlled by the State Planning Commission, the organization charged with drafting, implementing, and supervising the Five-Year Plans. The family had hard-won political credentials: Abram was an economist and statistician who worked in the 1930s for the State Planning Commission and the Central Administration for Economic Accounting, surviving the purges in those organizations and the Communist Party.⁴ Vera, an active Party member, twice earned official recognition for her work.⁵ Mira, for her part, studied in the Energy Sector of the Moscow Planning Institute before entering the Chernishevsky Institute of History, Philosophy, and Literature and, after a year of study there, the Gorky Literary Institute. Her father appears to have steered her away from the type of career path, with its enormous Party obligations, he had taken. Through the four years of her advanced studies, Mira demonstrated a talent for translating prose and poetry from English into Russian but less skill as a creative writer.⁶ The exact manner in which the young woman entered Prokofiev's life in 1938 remains unclear. Recalling the first months of her infatuation with him, Mira writes in clichés about riverside strolls, gift exchanges (in January 1939, Prokofiev gave her a photograph inscribed "to a blossoming poet from a modest admirer"), and dances at the Union of Soviet Writers club.⁷ Rumors soon began to circulate about the nascent fall-spring romance.⁸

In the opening pages of her memoirs, Mira reports on Prokofiev's creative habits in 1938 and 1939, but provides nothing in the way of specific details. The account is at times naively self-serving: "During that winter, Sergey Sergeyevich was at work on the *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata. I often recall him telling me with a grin about all of the mistakes he had to scrape out of it, and how he thought of me at the time."⁹ Her account of the ensuing months excludes mention of political events. Mira recalls Prokofiev asking her to meet with him again in the summer of 1939 in Kislovodsk, where he and the Stanislavsky Theater collective had relocated. In July, on the heels of the arrest of Meyerhold, he began his fraught collaboration with Birman on *Semyon Kotko*. He and Mira joked about his efforts to educate, or at

least correct, the untested director: "How is the 'tuning up' [nastraivaniye] of Birman going?" Mira asked Prokofiev in a July 16, 1939, letter. "Thought of anything new?"¹⁰ Ill-timed humor about the ill-timed opera notwithstanding, the romance provided a release of sorts from the extreme pressure under which Prokofiev was then working. Upon Mira's arrival in Kislovodsk in August, the two of them toured the Kislovodsk Castle of Wile and Love, and went on brief trips to three other North Caucasus resorts: Essentuki, Zheleznovodsk, and (together with one of the *Semyon Kotko* cast members) Adil-Su.¹¹

The real-world implications of their relationship began to become clear in the fall of 1939. At this time, Prokofiev became entangled in the disputes surrounding the Leningrad premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*, leaving Mira to prepare for her final-year exams. In a December 26 letter to her, he offers caustic insight into the discontent in the Kirov Theater. He claims that the challenge of coordinating the spectacle, the tense atmosphere, "stinging remarks," and "the hysterics of [Galina] Ulanova and the prophet Isaiah [Isay Sherman]" had led to the postponement of the premiere from December to January. "In the breaks between rehearsals, I am pasting in changes to the score, the primary purpose being to harden its edges, for the dancers cannot grasp anything even a little subtle and, having been taught to think with their feet, they get lost."¹²

Before his departure for Leningrad, Prokofiev told Lina about the affair. The stressful atmosphere in the apartment worsened to the extent that Prokofiev isolated himself in his study. It was there, during a period of anguished domestic conflict, that he composed his birthday present for Stalin. Mira recalls him musing about escaping to a distant corner of the planet with her. Life at home was "empty," since Lina "showed little interest" in him.¹³ Here Prokofiev was being dishonest, since, as Mira herself comes close to declaring, Lina devoted herself entirely to him, supporting his decision to relocate to Moscow and placing her welfare in his hands upon joining him there.

Mira offers just one of three sides to the story that belongs to her, Prokofiev, and Lina alone. Certain other details, however, deserve brief mention, since they provide context for the composer's creative activities.

In the summer of 1939, before their separation, Prokofiev and Lina considered acquiring a summer house, or dacha, in Nikolina Gora, a cooperative of artists, composers, and writers established in the late 1920s on the western fringe of Moscow. (The area remains one of the wealthiest, and most exclusive, in all of Russia.) Lamm had a dacha there (with Myaskovsky

as summer tenant), as did Lavrovsky. To finance the purchase, the couple decided to leave their Ulitsa Chkalova apartment—which had been allotted to them by the Committee on Arts Affairs—and move to a less expensive one. For a time, the family planned to move into a building at 40 Leninskoye Shosse. It emerges from the letter in question (that in which Lina tells her husband about the murder of Zinaida Raykh) that she intended to vacation apart from Prokofiev in southern Ukraine, but that her travel permit, required for movement within the Soviet Union, had not appeared. Her plans were at a standstill, she lamented. “I sent two photographs and a telegram to Kiev with a request for a response of some sort but nothing has been heard—what happened there? It’s now clear that I can’t count on it—I absolutely don’t know what I can do.”¹⁴ She traveled in the end to Gagra, a resort in the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic of Soviet Georgia, on the northeast coast of the Black Sea.¹⁵ Later lines in Lina’s letter attest to her troubles obtaining singing engagements. She had met that day with Georgiy Kreytner, a high-ranking member of the Committee on Arts Affairs, seeking a contract to perform repertoire in foreign languages for State Radio, but given the xenophobic cultural climate of the time, Kreytner could not or would not help her. “I am terribly distressed by current events,” she comments with regard to her problems with State Radio.¹⁶ The extent to which Prokofiev used his influence to support his wife’s career remains unclear. In the fall of 1939, he started to untangle their lives, appearing less and less frequently with her in public. (Lina attended the premieres of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Semyon Kotko*; Mira was also in attendance at the latter, leading to an awkward, strained moment among the three of them.)¹⁷ In the summer of 1940 he rented a dacha at Nikolina Gora—a purchase came later—and spent what turned out to be his last summer together with his family. He continued to see Mira, the justification being their collaboration on a libretto.

On June 1, 1940, Lina wrote her husband a trilingual letter that evinces profound despair, a letter that touches on their shared spiritual, creative, and personal outlook. References to Lev Tolstoy and Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science Church, collide on the pages. The following lines, written largely in Russian, illustrate her suspicions about Mira’s background:

Remember what you wrote after the first meeting. It was hardly you who chose them [Mira and her family], but they who “chose” you—where? At a health resort—you, not

some speck of sand, but S. S. P., the leading composer of the nation, a famous person with a family-man aura, twice as old. And it was not incognito. *Perhaps you will say “love at first sight” — who will believe [that]? There were sufficient witnesses in Kislovodsk to the fact that she followed you everywhere.*¹⁸

For Lina, Mira's starstruck pursuit of Prokofiev seemed coarsely calculated and transparent. In the months after her husband had decided to leave home, she enjoined him to terminate what she considered to be a self-destructive dalliance. Lina offers an insight—in English—taken directly from Christian Science: “Turn to real identity and substance which will give you the real support you are in need of now. No human theory, person or book, will give it to you—real understanding is not intellectual, not the result of scholarly attainments; it is the reality of things brought to life.”¹⁹ Prokofiev, in her opinion, had been deceived in a fashion that would rob his life of spiritual purpose. Here Lina invokes the Christian Science precept that earthly desires impair the pursuit of the divine, exerting negative pressure on the immortal mind. Lina ends her plea to her husband by once again paraphrasing Eddy: “Mankind must learn that evil is not power. Its so-called despotism is but a phase of nothingness.”²⁰ This belief had enabled her and Prokofiev to cope with the “terrible” present.

Prokofiev left Lina on March 15, 1941. Mira recalls that, late that night, he unexpectedly called her from a Moscow train station to announce his decision.²¹ (Lina describes the departure as a panicked response to Mira's “disgraceful” threats to take her own life if she could not be with him, but also, more tellingly, as “a psychological escape from the terrible disappointment of reality.”)²² Prokofiev went to Leningrad to stay with Demchinsky; Mira joined him there a few days later. The two of them were thereafter inseparable, though the impulsiveness of their relationship obliged them to live an itinerant, unsettled existence. Prior to the outbreak of the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, they spent part of their time in Moscow with Mira's parents, with whom Prokofiev developed an adequate relationship, and part of it in her family's dacha at Kratovo. Prokofiev pledged to provide material support for his family, but ruled out the possibility of returning home. His relationship with Mira was much more than an affair, but the beginning of a creative and personal partnership, despite the difference in their ages and experiences.

Appassionata

Prokofiev's relationship with Mira inspired several realized and speculative operatic projects. The period was also marked by a tempestuous rededication to piano composition—one that invites all manner of allegorical interpretations. In the fall of 1939, according to Mira, Prokofiev conceived a trio of piano works (his Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Sonatas), informing her that the first and second of them would be “restless and stormlike” and the third “tender and dreamlike.”²³ He added that the first theme of the first movement of the Eighth Sonata—an *andante dolce* tune that floats in and out of B-flat major—came to him after one of his walks with her. Though his description of the character of these three major works recalls that of “Florestan” and “Eusebius” from Schumann's *Carnaval*—a favorite score—Prokofiev also appears to have drawn inspiration from Beethoven. In the summer of 1939, he read the original French-language edition of Romain Rolland's *Beethoven the Creator*, specifically those passages that addressed the “Appassionata” Sonata, a composition that, according to Rolland, comprised a “union of unrestrained passion and rigid logic.”²⁴ Prokofiev's Sixth Sonata involves a comparable fusion between violent impulse and classical discipline; it operates, on syntactical and referential levels, from opposing standpoints of chaos and order. Myaskovsky deemed the work Janus-faced, a “mixture of the old and new Prokofiev.”²⁵ The score suggested a dialogue between Neoprimitivism and Neoclassicism, which recalls the “Sturm und Drang” and “empfindsamer Stil” dialogue of another pianistic era.

The Sixth Sonata is cast in four expansive movements totaling, by Prokofiev's own calculation, twenty-five minutes in length. Traditional sonata form provides the framework for movement one, though the divisions between its thematic components are obfuscated and embellished and the harmonic polarities intensified.²⁶ The first theme—containing a nerve-jangling, compulsive motive that repeats in syncopated sixteenth and eighth notes—juxtaposes the tonic triads of A major and A minor. The teetering between C sharp and C natural, the mediant of the competing tonal domains, is one of several forces of destabilization in the movement. The development section involves contrapuntal imitation at the tritone rather than the fifth; the first and second themes are broken down into transposable units that become indistinguishable from one another. As testament to the movement's logical illogic, the bridge from the development into the recapitulation decreases, rather than increases, the energy level: the collision of semitonal forces reaches a stalemate with

the deployment of interlocking whole tone scale fragments. The stalemate persists throughout the recapitulation: here, the thematic components of the exposition are concatenated. Prokofiev concludes the movement with a terse hammer stroke on the pitches B flat and A natural.

The drama of the movement resides in the foregrounding of dissonances over consonances, non-resolutions over resolutions, but also on something more visceral: the liquidation of pitch itself for sheer sonic effect. At the March 10, 1940, adjudication of the score in Prokofiev's presence at the Union of Soviet Composers, Klimentiy Korchmaryov asserted that the ostinato patterns and melodic and harmonic idiosyncrasies of the first movement bore much in common with Prokofiev's earlier sonatas and those of other, Prokofiev-inspired composers. Korchmaryov insisted that he "liked" the second and third movements of the work—the former a sped-up march, the latter a slowed-down waltz—much more than the first. (He essentially reserved judgment on the fourth movement, a sonata-rondo structure that features, in the development section and the coda, the recurrence, like a nervous tic, of the percussive first theme of the first movement.) Another adjudicator, Aleksandr Abramsky, countered that the first movement constituted a significant innovation owing to the "almost complete absence of figuration": there were no harmonies, he asserted, for the nonharmonic pitches to embellish. In place of figuration, Prokofiev stressed its opposite: four-note pitch groups played *col pugno*—with the fist. Abramsky also offered the thought that the Sixth Sonata evinced both "internal" and "external" simplicity, a reference to its symmetrical proportions and directness of expression.²⁷

Two days before the adjudication, Prokofiev unveiled the Sixth Sonata at a gathering in Lamm's apartment. The audience included Svyatoslav Richter, who became Prokofiev's preferred pianist in the years ahead, after he recognized that his own technique had begun to wane owing to lack of time to practice and the effects of aging. On this occasion, however, Prokofiev evinced impertinent youthfulness, twice reading through the Sixth Sonata from the manuscript before abruptly departing. Richter turned the pages, deciding in the midst of the recital to learn the score.²⁸ Prokofiev premiered it on April 8, 1940; Richter performed it on November 26, his technique outshining that of the composer. In response, Prokofiev later fashioned for himself and for Richter one of the most challenging and mesmerizing movements in the piano repertoire, the finale of the Seventh Sonata, a *precipitato* toccata in 7/8 time. Befitting its impulsive character, the draft for this movement shows almost no signs of revision.²⁹

Mira claimed that the Seventh Sonata was conceived alongside the Sixth and Eighth Sonatas, but the surviving source materials suggest another chronology. Melodic material for the three works dates as far back as 1935.³⁰ In the fall of 1939, Prokofiev produced two pages of sketches for the Sixth Sonata, but also penned, on the back of the second sheet, an outline of the entire Eighth Sonata.³¹ The Seventh Sonata is the conception of a later time (1942) and place (Tbilisi), when Prokofiev felt less grounded but also less constrained. It is the most radical of the three works, which are as a group more radical than anything else in Prokofiev's mature oeuvre. They were also successful—more so than many of the works he calibrated for success. In the realm of Soviet piano music, accessibility was not a precondition for acceptability.

The three sonatas are united in the radiant discord of their melodic and harmonic language and the willfulness of their rhythmic writing. The music is abstract insofar as it avoids external references, but for the composer, abstraction bore programmatic, spiritualistic associations. One could fancifully argue that the three sonatas transcend their own structural and syntactical constraints, revealing those constraints to be the false postulates of false reasoning. This notion finds general support in the analytical literature: Deborah Anne Rifkin, for example, argues that the music of the second movement of the Seventh Sonata is both tonal and nontonal at the same time, owing to the substitution, right at the start, of implied chords for actual chords, motivic relationships for harmonic ones.³² The erasure of tonal links suggests a process of dematerialization.

At the time of its dissemination, however, the Seventh Sonata was interpreted as an abstract embodiment of wartime struggle. Richter claimed that the first movement plunges the listener "into the anxiously threatening atmosphere of a world that has lost its balance.... In the tremendous struggle that this involves, we find the strength to affirm the irrepressible life-force."³³ His premiere of the work in Moscow on January 18, 1943, represented one of his greatest professional triumphs (he performed it twice), and ensured Prokofiev would receive a Stalin Prize (Second Class) for it. The announcement of the 50,000-ruble award was, according to Mira, a cause of "great celebration."³⁴ For the much more enigmatic Eighth Sonata, which Emil Gilels premiered in Moscow on December 30, 1944, the public and critical response proved more reserved. However, it earned a First Class Stalin Prize, testament to the bolstering of Prokofiev's reputation among his peers during the war years.

Leskov

Although the preceding comments might signal otherwise, the progress of Prokofiev's career between 1940 and 1943 affirms that he was first and foremost a theatrical composer, who relied, commissions permitting, on the great books for inspiration. The contradiction between his inclination toward abstraction and his reliance on literature is resolved by his text-setting method, which emphasizes the rhythm and cadence of language over its semantic content. Mira at first aided Prokofiev's constant search for operatic subjects by drawing his attention to writers who borrowed from folklore and street lingo to enrich the intonations of their syntax.

Following the belated Leningrad premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*, Prokofiev asked Mira to help him locate an opera subject. The text he eventually settled on, Richard Sheridan's 1775 comic drama *The Duenna*, or *The Double Elopement*, perhaps attests to his desire to depart a scarred present for a benign eighteenth-century fantasy. "Prokofiev," Richard Taruskin writes, "immediately sensed" the "possibilities" of Sheridan's text "for innocent musical 'champagne à la Mozart or Rossini.'"³⁵ Yet the path from the fraught ideological terrain of Prokofiev's first Soviet opera, *Semyon Kotko*, to the blatantly "anti-clerical and anti-mercantile" burlesque of *The Duenna* was hardly smooth.³⁶ Prokofiev explored several other subjects, and came close in 1940 to setting a drama by Nikolay Leskov, who was the author of the source text of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*.

After considering *The Dowerless Girl* (*Bespridannitsa*, 1878) and *The Thunderstorm* (*Groza*, 1859) by Aleksandr Ostrovsky, Prokofiev drafted an operatic synopsis for Leskov's melodrama *The Spendthrift* (*Rastochitel'*, 1867).³⁷ Like the Ostrovsky works, the drama concerns the exploitation of poor folk by mercantile ne'er-do-wells.³⁸ The improbable story line pits Firs Knyazev, a womanizing businessman with a cruel streak (tempered only by the onset of old age) against Ivan Molchanov, his dependent. It quickly emerges that Knyazev had murdered Molchanov's father in a business dispute, but had nonetheless become the boy's guardian. The tale traces Molchanov's maturation: his unhappy prearranged marriage, his studies abroad, and his rise in status. Eager to avenge the perverse injustice of his childhood, he turns to the courts to have his inheritance—which comes from Knyazev's unsavory business practices—assigned to a local orphanage. The old man foils the plan by accusing Molchanov of squandering the inheritance, and bribes the courts to rule in his favor. The upstanding Molchanov, unfairly branded a wastrel,

winds up in an asylum. The story progresses to two outlandish climaxes: Molchanov escapes from the asylum and, in a strange purification ritual, sets the town on fire. He dies in the inferno, a tragedy that delights Knyazev until the courts, in an unexpected turnaround, send him to jail for corruption.

Even as melodrama, the story line is unconvincing, but Prokofiev, enamored of Leskov's use of dialect and colorful anecdotes, began to tinker with it. He conceived an operatic version of the tale in five acts, framing it with scenes in which Knyazev recounts his dreadful past in a delirium.³⁹ The voice of a hapless old merchant, whom the villain had once tried to drown, reverberates in his consciousness. "I am drowning... I am drowning..." Knyazev hears; "forget... forget..." he mutters to himself. To enhance the pathos of this scene, Prokofiev imagined a river coming into view upstage, and Knyazev slipping beneath the water's surface.

Prokofiev mapped out *The Spendthrift* along Chaikovskian lines, freighting the scenario with love duets and hypnotic orchestral interludes. He assigned the duets to Molchanov and his suicidal mistress, Marina. The romantic subplot dominates the middle scenes, which prevents them from getting bogged down in grimly satiric financial and judicial matters. The ending differs from that of the source text. There is no *deus ex machina*; the characters decide their own fates. In the last scene, Knyazev's factory is ordered burned to the ground, a much more substantial punishment for the villain than imprisonment. Molchanov and Marina are reunited and perform a "big love duet," but there is no relief in it, for she has taken poison. The defeated, enfeebled Knyazev makes a last-gasp attempt to stab his foe, but suffers pangs of conscience and another bout of delirium: "Save me... I am drowning..." The hero and heroine, conceived as positive characters in a negative world, submit to the approaching flames.

It is hard to imagine any operatic treatment of *The Spendthrift*, a tale of shattered spirits without a clear-cut moral, reaching the Soviet stage—especially after the setbacks suffered by Shostakovich for *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Before abandoning it for happier operatic terrain, Prokofiev wrote to his trusted friend Demchinsky. The February 11, 1940, letter bears more than a hint of special pleading:

I really need your advice and input. I came across Leskov's drama *The Spendthrift*. On first glance, it is a dark, base thing. But what do you think? It might yield insight and enlightenment. I will have to take out the talk about money,

and enhance and expand the positive characters. But there will remain exquisite language, sharply drawn characters, and a series of dramatic situations that might bring to light something powerful.

Please read it. I am thinking of coming to Leningrad on February 18th or 19th. We could confer then—or earlier, if you are planning to be in Moscow beforehand. But don't be frightened by the first impression, and try to follow my train of thought. The greatness of the cockerel lies in his ability to find the pearl in the straw.⁴⁰

The Aesop fable to which Prokofiev alludes in the last line—"The Cockerel and the Pearl"—concludes with the cockerel discarding the pearl for grain, the moral being that value lies in the eye of the beholder. Finding little of merit in the proposed opera scenario, Demchinsky told Prokofiev and his new co-librettist Mira to search the straw anew.

The Duenna

It was Mira who chose the subject.⁴¹ She received a request from a former fellow student (Tatyana Ozerskaya) at the Gorky Literary Institute to assist with the translation of Sheridan's comedy *The Duenna*, a parody of parodies of English mores transplanted from the streets of London to eighteenth-century Seville. Sheridan enlisted his father- and brother-in-law (both named Thomas Linley) to provide music for the multilayered drama: the resulting work, a blend of original and borrowed songs, proved more popular during its opening run than the balladic farce that had inspired it: John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. Noting the success of the Moscow Arts Theater staging of Sheridan's *School for Scandal* at the time, Mira agreed to assist Ozerskaya with the translation. But her plans changed when she summarized the plot to Prokofiev, who found its variegated tomfoolery appealing. The two of them worked on the libretto in the spring of 1940 (the completed autograph dates from May 27), and then, according to Mira, shopped it around to Moscow theaters after it had been approved for development by Glavrepertkom. Prokofiev evidently conceived the work at this point as either a musical or a play with incidental songs. He completed the first draft of the actual opera between mid-July and September, traveling back and forth from Nikolina Gora (where he did not have the use of a piano) and Moscow (where he did) with draft material.

The project was undeniably escapist, as was the instantly appealing music that resulted. Prokofiev worked without an advance contract on *The Duenna* in uncomfortable domestic circumstances. On September 19, 1940, he played through the score for the artistic directors of the Stanislavsky Theater and representatives from the Radio Committee.⁴² Both groups expressed interest, and both drew up contracts for the opera on the same day: October 28. (The thought seems to have been to have a simultaneous premiere in two venues, with Prokofiev hedging his bets that if Glavrepertkom did not approve the performance of the opera for the Stanislavsky Theater, it would at least be broadcast on State Radio, which was subject to less official control; this is exactly what came to pass.) The agreement with the Stanislavsky Theater specified an opera of nine scenes, with the piano score to be submitted on October 28 (the date of the agreement) and the orchestral score on January 1; Prokofiev would be paid 15,000 rubles in installments for the music and 7,500 rubles for the libretto, and the theater would set aside 3,500 rubles for assistance with the preparation of the orchestration.⁴³ The contract with the Radio Committee, involving the same fees, specified a lyric comedy of exactly two hours and twenty minutes, with the piano score to be submitted on November 1 and the orchestral score on January 15.⁴⁴ On October 16, 1940, Prokofiev gave an interview in the family apartment that summarized his progress and confirmed that the premiere would take the form of a broadcast: "Recently I finished the sketches of my new four-act opera. Its final title has still not been determined.... I have now begun the opera's orchestration. All of these pages of manuscript paper, on which you see pencil annotations, have now been orchestrated. I hope that in the second half of the winter season the opera will be broadcast and perhaps staged."⁴⁵

A broadcast of selections from the score occurred on June 7, 1941. By this time the opera was in preparation at the Stanislavsky Theater, but the troupe had begun to second-guess the score: the theater's "insufficient belief in the piece" and the beginning of war prevented the staging from being realized, Mira recalled.⁴⁶ In the absence of transcripts of the assessments it is impossible to pinpoint the exact nature of the concerns. The revisions that Prokofiev undertook in the spring of 1943 (after the Committee on Arts Affairs permitted the Bolshoy Theater to explore a staging) suggest that his dependence on declamation to motivate the drama—a dependence that stemmed from an aversion to dramatic stasis—had come back to haunt him. A list of alterations dated April 4, 1943, find him buttressing the lyrical content of the score at the expense of the declamation: melodies that had

been the domain of the orchestra alone enter into the vocal parts.⁴⁷ Most of the changes bear the imprint of political doctrine; others, however, reveal an independent, nonpolitical impulse to compress the score and sharpen its dramatic contrasts: Prokofiev excised, for example, four measures from the overture to make the shift between two melodies more explicit. However, despite inspired work on both the first version and the revisions, the opera would not be premiered until November 3, 1946, in compromised form in Leningrad. (A more spirited staging would be organized in 1947 by VOKS for the Grand Opera of the Fifth of May in Prague.)

The plot celebrates the miscommunications, mistaken identities, and amorous caprice common to operatic wedding comedies. Don Jerome, a Seville merchant, betrothes his daughter Louisa to the rich but old Jewish fishmonger Isaac Mendoza. Louisa prefers the poor but young Don Antonio, and plots with her wealth-seeking governess, the duenna of the title, to engineer a solution to her dilemma. The two of them swap attire, the eventual result being Louisa's marriage to Antonio and the duenna's to Mendoza. Another story line involves Jerome's son Ferdinand, who enlists Louisa's help in his pursuit of Donna Clara, whose affluent father wants her to enter a convent. For this task, Louisa must disguise herself again and engage in another round of merry hoodwinking. The couples bribe the tippling prior of a local monastery to perform the three weddings, which Jerome, deceived into compliance, blesses. Prokofiev described the entire farrago with characteristic brevity: "The subject is old and banal, but developed by the English dramatist with great humor and brilliance."⁴⁸

The libretto fuses rhymed and unrhymed passages in accord with Sheridan's original. Prokofiev took the lead in translating, abbreviating, and assembling the text: many of the draft pages are in his hand alone; those in Mira's hand show his corrections and suggestions for alternate wording.⁴⁹ They worked from a typescript of Sheridan's original, with Prokofiev writing translations of choice passages in the margins along with occasional musical comments. Of the twenty-seven songs and ensembles composed (or borrowed) for Sheridan by the Linley father-and-son team, Prokofiev and Mira kept those six that motivated the plot either by their content, something that happens within them, or by their affect, their ability to sharpen the distinctions between the comical (physical) and lyrical (emotional) characters in the plot.⁵⁰ He considered retaining two additional songs—Clara's "By him have we love offended," and Antonio's "How oft, Louisa, hast though told"—but discarded them in an effort to avoid redundancy. He altogether

avoided those that smacked of anti-Semitism, such as “Give Isaac the nymph who no beauty can boast.”

Prokofiev devised the first three scenes of tableau 1 independent of the source text.⁵¹ These scenes establish right at the start a slapstick parallel between catching fish and reeling in spouses. Scene 2 enhances the depictions of Jerome and Mendoza while also mocking, on a meta-operatic level, the familiar operatic practice of assigning leitmotifs to the individual characters. Prokofiev first highlights the verbal tics of the two old men, and then introduces those background melodic figures that will stutter alongside them as the plot unfolds. Scene 3 moves the drama from the comic to the lyric plane. Prokofiev introduces Ferdinand and his servant Lopez. The former speaks of his love for Clara as he bumps into Antonio, who speaks in turn of his love for Louisa. Everything proceeds according to opera buffa conventions until scene 4—the first scene that Prokofiev calibrated according to Sheridan’s text. Here the conventions begin to undercut themselves: the music, hitherto content to support the action and allow the characters to take themselves too seriously, begins to interrupt and interfere with them. Masked figures—participants in the carnival season festivities that frame the central amorous intrigue—enter the stage to report that Antonio, who plans to serenade Louisa beneath her window, will not elicit a response from her, since “the little beauty is sound asleep” (*krasotka krepko spit*). The serenade continues, and Louisa, contradicting the maskers, rouses herself to sing along with Antonio. The maskers return, this time urging Jerome to grab hold of the “mewing,” moonstruck Antonio “by the tail” (*lovi yego za khvost*). In scene 6, the maskers stage an eerie, Orientalia-laden nocturnal dance that has the dual effect of overshadowing the drama and transforming it. The operatic characters are confronted by their balletic doubles: they appear quite literally besides themselves. In scene 7, the maskers perform a second such dance as a riposte, on the comic plane, to Jerome’s imprecations. The opening woodwind melodies, snare drum accompaniment, and concluding brass cascades come straight from Maurice Ravel’s *Boléro*. Henceforth in the opera the dance starts and stops in obsessive, impulsive fashion, symbolizing a kind of mechanistic anamnesis. The music, which is associated with adolescent celebration, allows the older characters in the opera to reexperience their forgotten youth.

Tableau 1 (there are nine in all) concludes with another sublime exchange, this time between sound and vision. From the very outset of his work on the opera, Prokofiev intended to conclude scene 7 of the tableau with an

avalanche of euphoric brass and percussion sounds, and scene 8 with a murmuring fade-out. “The maskers disperse,” Prokofiev specifies in the score, “it is quite dark. New maskers appear. They are visible only in silhouette and dance without making a sound.”⁵² The music suggests a departing carnival, but the visuals indicate the opposite—that the carnival has only just arrived. From this point forward, the mysterious fancy of the two dances infiltrates the sung and spoken dialogue of the principal characters.

The integration of song and dance, like the integration of the plot with meta-operatic interpretation, further attests to Prokofiev’s aversion to stasis irrespective of the dramatic situation. In tableau 6, for example, Jerome casually gives his daughter his blessing to wed Antonio amid the discordant strains of amateur music-making. Jerome blows a minuet tune of his own composition through a clarinet while berating two other musicians—a trumpeter and a drummer—to play in tune and in time with him. Distracted, he gives Louisa away to the person he does not want her to wed. The half-comic, half-tragic pathos of the scene resides in his failed attempt to surround himself with the aristocratic décor of neoclassical dance. In the final wedding scene, he sheds the pretense. Echoed by the chorus, Jerome sings the words “I’ve fixed up my son, fixed up my daughter and, by the way, untied my hands” (*ustroil sina, doch’ ustroil, kstati ruki razvyazal*) while tinkling glasses of champagne. Having given up his career as a court composer in pressed linen and a powdered wig, he entertains the crowd in much more modest fashion by playing spoons.

Prokofiev explained his general approach to *The Duenna* on several occasions in the Soviet press. In *Vechnyaya Moskva* he emphasized his juxtaposition of episodes of amorous euphoria with a lampoon of institutionalized religion and Catholic confessionals:

One of the most lyrical scenes in the opera takes place in the garden of the convent, where the heroine [Louisa] dreams about her beloved. This scene is contrasted with another, Bacchic one in the cellar of a monastery. The monks drink wine and after a series of comic peripeteia here they wed the lovers. Among the characters of this scene are Father Benedictine and Father Chartres.⁵³

Prokofiev prefaces this general remark by noting his reliance in *The Duenna* on arias, ariettas, and various types of ensembles. He endeavored to preserve

the mixed-world, *theatrum mundi* features of his previous comic opera, *The Love for Three Oranges*, while avoiding its coarse declamation-based grotesqueries. The result is a blend of allusions to Mozart (*Così fan tutte*), Gioachino Rossini (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Richard Strauss (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Carl Maria von Weber (*Der Freischütz*), and, as Shostakovich pointed out in a review of the Leningrad premiere, Giuseppe Verdi (*Falstaff*).⁵⁴ These references do not just showcase Prokofiev's encyclopedic knowledge of the repertoire; they enhance the philosophical weight of *The Duenna*, infusing it with a sense of cultural breadth, Orphic mystery, and Platonic introspection. Of course, Prokofiev also quotes himself, assigning, for example, the tune of "Elle était fille, / Elle était amoureuse" from *Eugene Onegin* to Carlos, Mendoza's impoverished, down-at-the-heels companion. This character sings the tune to Louisa in the exact middle of the opera, reminding her that even if time does not seem to move, even if "it seems suspended in the air" (kak budto ono povislo v vozdukhe), it does in fact move, irrevocably so. The paradox of the score, one embodied in other Russian operas, is that this motion tends to be circular, rounded.

No work in his oeuvre better attests to Prokofiev's melodic brilliance and to the inspiration provided by his relationship with Mira. Indeed, that ingenuity draws attention to itself in the score. Melodies that a less-gifted composer would covet are no sooner introduced than swept away in the carnival season gaiety. Since, however, the opera is a meditation on both forgotten and recovered youth, the melodies inevitably return in the vocal lines and orchestral background.

The Duenna took five years to receive a premiere, and then became a fixture in the Soviet repertoire after Prokofiev's death. Its history speaks volumes about the cultural and political constraints of the Stalinist era.

Tolstoy's Novels to Music

The problems that delayed the premiere of *The Duenna*, and the problems that would delay the time-obsessed ballet *Cinderella*, for which Prokofiev also signed a contract in late 1940, pale in comparison to those associated with *War and Peace*, his most significant Soviet achievement and the composition that arguably defines his legacy. From 1941 to 1952, this opera, a setting of disparate scenes from Tolstoy's eponymous, serialized novel of 1863–69, dominated his thoughts. It became for him what the grand opera *Les Troyens* was to Hector Berlioz: the governing obsession of his career.

The history of *The Duenna* dovetails with that of *War and Peace*, which shows the extent to which Prokofiev continued, even in the wake of *Semyon Kotko*, to aspire to create an iconic Soviet opera, whether in the comedic or patriotic mode. Although his greatest successes came in other domains, opera was the one he most cherished. Seemingly helpless in the face of his own creative drive, his life became, like his art, a manifestation of contrast-driven dramaturgy.

Prokofiev expressed an interest in setting *War and Peace* to music even before his permanent relocation to Moscow. In 1935, while touring in Chelyabinsk, he informed the singer Vera Dukhovskaya that he “long dreamt about writing an opera on this subject,” but banished the thought owing to the monumental amount of labor the project would entail.⁵⁵ Given that projects on a grand scale defined the Stalinist era, his fascination with the operatic potential of the novel increased, rather than decreased, over time. On April 12, 1941, he drafted an outline for the opera in a notebook. It included eleven scenes, the first detailing the visit between the Rostovs and the elder Prince Bolkonsky, and the last describing the French retreat and the liberation of Pierre Bezukhov. (Prokofiev also jotted down a note about “Prince Andrey and the oak tree,” the barrenness of the latter at first symbolizing for the prince the confutation—the falseness—of his life. Later, the tree denotes the potential of renewal.)⁵⁶ Four months later, Prokofiev returned to the outline and fleshed it out, adding a prefatory episode at the Rostov estate. This twelve-scene outline became the basis, with reconfiguring and compression in the second half, of the first version of the opera, which the composer produced in piano score between August 15, 1941, and April 13, 1942. His rapid pace astonished his colleagues.

In April, however, Prokofiev had not yet committed himself to *War and Peace*; instead he found himself attracted to another Tolstoy novel, one that related, at least obliquely, to his spiritual beliefs: *Resurrection*. His interest in this work was brief but intense, and it was brought about by another eminent composer: Shostakovich. On October 14, 1940, Shostakovich had signed a contract with the Kirov Theater to write the music for an operatic version of *Resurrection* called *Katyusha Maslova*, after the novel’s heroine. The libretto was written over the course of ten months by the playwright Anatoliy Mariengof, a member of the composer’s social circle. Mariengof drafted the first act of the four-act libretto in January 1941, after which he requested an extension of the deadline until April, since he had been unable to consult sufficiently with Shostakovich. He completed the draft in

March. Once the Kirov Theater had vetted it, the libretto was forwarded to Glavrepertkom.⁵⁷ By this time, Shostakovich had decided against composing the opera.

Knowing something of the negotiations between Shostakovich, Mariengof, and the Kirov Theater, Prokofiev wrote to his rival asking him to confirm whether he was planning to compose *Katyusha Maslova*.⁵⁸ Shostakovich gave Prokofiev permission to pursue the project in his place. His strange, rambling letter reads in part:

I won't evidently be writing an opera on the subject of *Resurrection*. But for now, I request that you keep this circumstance between us. For an entire series of reasons, it is very hard for me now to decline the opera formally. With me it has come about that, as they say, "If a claw is caught, the whole bird is lost." My librettist and great friend, the writer A. B. Mariengof, will be very hurt and offended by my refusal to work with him and thus I need some time for a gradual modulation. I ask you not to be angry at me for adding my *Katyusha Maslova* to your life. But my personality is such that I am sometimes quite incapable of rashly and drastically causing people pain. In this instance I can't bring Mariengof grief, since in the first place we are friends, but most important because he (Mariengof) is having a very hard time of it: his seventeen-year-old son very recently hanged himself.⁵⁹

In the next paragraph, Shostakovich abruptly changes the subject to Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata, critiquing what he considered to be an overemphasis on musical illustration at the expense of thematic development in the score, but he also expressed the hope that Prokofiev would earn a Stalin Prize for it. He ends by praising Prokofiev's Sixth Piano Sonata. Nothing further is said about Mariengof, his son, or his libretto.

One can only speculate about Shostakovich's and Prokofiev's fleeting interests in *Resurrection*. The plot centers on the self-indulgent Prince Dmitriy Nekhlyudov, who is called to jury to decide the fate of a prostitute accused of murder. He recognizes the defendant, *Katyusha Maslova*, as a former ward of his aunt's whom he had seduced, gotten with child, and who, unbeknownst to him, had been cast out of the house when her

dishonor was revealed. Although innocent of the crime for which she was charged, Maslova is sentenced by the bumbling, mumbling jury to four years of *katorga*—penal servitude. Racked by guilt for the injustices he has committed against Maslova, Nekhlyudov trails her to Siberia, where he arranges for a commutation of her sentence. She is unmoved by his intervention and disdainful of his effort to save himself by saving her. Nekhlyudov takes solace in the Gospels, having learned that time cannot be rewound to undo past wrongs. He deduces that, without the liberating possibility of atonement, he must either walk away from his past sins or suffer the torment of eternal remorse.

Resurrection concludes in the same bleak geographical place as Leskov's, though not Shostakovich's, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. In the former, *katorga* enables spiritual rebirth; in the latter it does not. Both plots involve seduction and violence, but *Resurrection* explores modes of redemption, a detail that doubtless interested Shostakovich, who had restored himself to official favor with his Fifth Symphony. Prokofiev may have been attracted to the plot for personal reasons, not least of all its meditations on self-affirmation and self-forgiveness. In his libretto, Mariengof added a scene in which Maslova is reading *Eugene Onegin* in bed while Nekhlyudov prowls around outside her window.⁶⁰ Had he ended up working with Mariengof and set this scene, Prokofiev would doubtless have assigned it some of the music he composed in 1936 for Tairov's unrealized staging of *Eugene Onegin*.

He did not have the chance. Mira's father strongly advised him against the project: "No, not *Resurrection*," he told his daughter over evening tea, "but if Sergey Sergeyevich wrote an opera on *War and Peace*!"⁶¹ The suggestion took hold, and Prokofiev discarded the mental outline of *Resurrection* for the drafted outline of *War and Peace*. Even had he ignored Abram's advice, however, he would not have been able to compose *Resurrection*. On May 10, 1941, Glavrepertkom told the Kirov Theater that Mariengof's libretto had been banned. The scenes of unjust imprisonment and the commentaries on the power of evil to nurture evil provided sufficient cause for annulling the project. Subsequent historical events would offer additional cause.

Evacuation

On June 22, 1941, Prokofiev and Mira received word from the distraught wife of the watchman at Kratovo that Germany had attacked the Soviet Union, launching an aerial bombardment on several cities in the dead of night

(4 a.m.). Eisenstein, who also resided in Kratovo at the time, confirmed the State Radio report. That morning Molotov had been notified by the German ambassador, Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg, that owing to numerous violations of the nonaggression pact, including the buildup of Soviet forces along its borders, his nation had declared war. The six-month German offensive, dubbed Operation Barbarossa, involved three armies, which advanced simultaneously on Leningrad, Moscow, and Kiev along the entire eastern edge of the Soviet Union, from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. Within a month, German soldiers occupied a massive area of the Soviet Union (twice the size of France) and would, by September 10, 1941, overtake the city of Smolensk, located just 250 miles from Moscow. Though anticipated by the Soviet government, the attack nonetheless came as a shock; Stalin did not address the nation about the siege until July 3.

Atovmyan reports that, as soon as the conflict began, the membership of the Union of Soviet Composers rallied in support of the Red Army: "The decision was made to mobilize all composers for the creation of anti-fascist songs," he recounts, adding that Muzfond was directed to "expand" and "hasten" its activities in support of the troops.⁶² These songs, written by poets and composers working both together and apart, were to be sent to the front as fast as the soldiers and tanks. Mira recalls, in the blandest of terms, that Prokofiev refocused his activities in the summer of 1941, first composing

two songs—"Song of the Brave," text by [Aleksey] Surkov, and a song to words by [Vladimir] Mayakovsky—these being the fastest means to respond to current events. Soon he began to write the orchestral suite *The Year 1941*, in which he was able to represent these experiences more fully. We also at this time found ourselves urgently drawn to *War and Peace*: the events described within its pages had become close and made an especially acute impression. The Committee on Arts Affairs backed the idea of writing a *War and Peace* opera and advised us to present a plan for a libretto.⁶³

At the start of August, Prokofiev returned to Moscow to sign the initial contract for the opera. The Committee on Arts Affairs informed him that he, Myaskovsky, and other major Soviet composers and actors were to be

evacuated to Nalchik, the capital of the Kabardino-Balkarian Autonomous Republic in southeastern RSFSR (the north slope of the Caucasus).⁶⁴ Prokofiev vacated the dacha and stayed for two days with Mira in the apartment of his former student Makarov-Rakitin, who had been conscripted. Before leaving for Nalchik on August 8, Prokofiev asked Lina whether she also wanted to evacuate. She decided to remain in Moscow with her children, then aged seventeen and twelve. Lina recalls Prokofiev being “distraught” on the day of his departure.⁶⁵ He left her some money and later the authorization, through Atovmyan, to collect his income from the Copyright Agency (Upravleniye po okhrane avtorskikh prav) and the Stanislavsky Theater.⁶⁶

The trip to Nalchik lasted four days (the artist-filled train was welcomed by a brass band). Prokofiev and Mira settled in the Hotel Nalchik, while most of the other composers who had traveled with them ended up in the city’s outskirts in the Dolinsk district. Prokofiev swiftly settled into work on *War and Peace*, drafting the first six scenes between August 15 and November 12 to a libretto that he and Mira extracted section by section from the source novel. Both the April and July outlines called for separating the peace scenes altogether from the war scenes; in the former (scenes 1-6), Prokofiev strove for intimate character portraits and, in the latter (scenes 7-12), for historical panorama. (The opera in this regard juxtaposes two different conceptions of dramatic time and space.) On November 15, 1941, Prokofiev played through scenes 5 and 6 for the first time for Mira, who marveled at the composer’s translation of Tolstoy’s conceptions of Natasha and especially Pierre into music.⁶⁷ The heroic attributes of the latter character increased as the score evolved, but he nonetheless kept his original comedic features. The growing, unspoken love between Natasha and Pierre in the first half of the opera struck an obvious chord with both Mira and Prokofiev, and they agreed that it would be prudent to create a broader, nationalistic parallel for it in the second half. They thus decided to have Field Marshal Mikhaíl Kutuzov allegorically take the place of Pierre in the battlefield scenes, and to have Napoleon substitute for Natasha’s malevolent bigamist suitor Anatol Kuragin, for whom she betrays Prince Andrey. This latter character would broadly embody the hopes and dreams of the Russian people, finding, through anguish, supreme clarity of purpose.

Other activities in Nalchik included fulfilling commissions that Khatu Temirkanov, the chairman of the Arts Affairs Administration (Upravleniya po delam iskusstv) in Nalchik, “courteously and efficiently” doled out to him and the other distinguished artists who had suddenly appeared in his

midst.⁶⁸ Prokofiev composed additional songs to texts by Mira—the words came after, rather than before, the music—and the aforementioned three-movement orchestral suite *The Year 1941*.⁶⁹ He also began work on his String Quartet on Kabardino-Balkarian Themes, for which Temirkanov offered an 8,000-ruble contract and useful source material: the transcriptions of regional songs and dances that had been made by nineteenth- and twentieth-century composers, including Sergey Taneyev, a pupil of Chaikovsky.⁷⁰ Prokofiev described the conception of this work in a routine overview of his wartime activities for Sovinformbyuro, the propaganda agency responsible for military-related information broadcast on Soviet Radio, published in Soviet newspapers, and translated into foreign languages.⁷¹ In an article dated May 24, 1944, Prokofiev commented that Temirkanov proposed merging “new and untouched Eastern folklore with the most classical of classical forms—the string quartet.” The idea intrigued him, but he worried that Nalchik audiences would not “understand and appreciate” his music, since, “excluding its excellent folksongs, Kabardinian musical culture, from a European musical perspective, remains undeveloped.” Temirkanov frowned on the stereotyping, instructing Prokofiev to “write what you feel: if we don’t understand your quartet at first, we will appreciate it later.”⁷²

Composed between November 2 and December 3, 1941, the String Quartet has a choreographic impulse: Prokofiev based the first movement on a dance for old men, “Udzh starikov,” and a four-part song, “Sosruko,” named after a Prometheus-like character from Caucasian mythology. The movement also includes, beginning at rehearsal number 5, a dance taken from Taneyev’s 1885 collection “On the Music of the Mountain Tatars.”⁷³ The second movement of the String Quartet features a haunting, ethereal version of a familiar dance called “Izlamey.” It is contrasted, at rehearsal number 22, with a second borrowing from Taneyev’s collection, an animated shepherd’s song.⁷⁴ The third and final movement, a sonata-rondo form, evokes a generic mountain dance.

Geographical precision was not Prokofiev’s first concern: the borrowed melodies are trans-Caucasian. He mimed, moreover, the sound of both a Ukrainian *garmoshka* (a unisonoric folk accordion) and a Turkish *kemanche* (a spike fiddle) in the score. Prokofiev shared his borrowed materials with Myaskovsky, who used them in his Symphony no. 23 (1941). Myaskovsky stylized the material; Prokofiev did as well, while preserving and enhancing its perceived archaisms. Myaskovsky branded Prokofiev’s score “wild-eyed and fantastical” in his diary, and “monstrously, even ‘nightmarishly’

interesting" in a letter.⁷⁵ In February 1942, Myaskovsky petitioned the Stalin Prize Committee to honor the String Quartet, but Khrapchenko dissented, claiming that the work did not make a particularly strong impression on him (he heard only a piano reduction). Even if, as Myaskovsky put it to him, Prokofiev had been "working insanely, composing an insane amount of music," it was insufficient reason to award him a Stalin Prize, since other composers worked just as slavishly. Khrapchenko's protracted opposition to Prokofiev gradually dissipated; in the years ahead, as Prokofiev's political fortunes improved, the chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs would recommend (subject to Central Committee approval) both First and Second Class Stalin Prizes for him. The turnaround was occasioned in part by a pleasant business meeting between the two of them late in 1942, the principal topic of conversation being *War and Peace*.⁷⁶

For Derzhanovsky, who attended the September 5, 1942, premiere performance of the String Quartet at the Moscow Conservatory, the open fifth and open fourth accompaniments, the parallel sevenths and seconds, and the (occasional) pitch clusters brought to mind, at least in the first movement, the primal energies of Prokofiev's 1915 *Scythian Suite*.⁷⁷ (The German air assault that delayed the performance doubtless increased the sense of implicit violence.) Stravinsky's 1913 neo-nationalist ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* furnished another, much less convincing, point of comparison. Some proof that Prokofiev sought to embellish the exotic effects of the work along neo-nationalist lines emerges from a comparison of the draft and final versions of the score. The first movement of the latter (in Lamm's hand) shows a marked increase in tempo over the former, which lends the sound a sense of aggressive abandon.⁷⁸

On November 20, 1941, Prokofiev and Mira received word that they would be relocated by overnight train from Nalchik, then under threat from the Wehrmacht, to Tbilisi, the secure capital of Georgia. They arrived in Tbilisi on November 24, settling in another, less agreeable hotel room in the Hotel Tbilisi. Both of them had become increasingly worried about the welfare of their families: Mira had altogether lost contact with her parents, and Prokofiev had received only brief secondhand reports—chiefly from Atovmyan, with whom he communicated by letter and telegram—about the well-being of Lina and his children. He began to hear directly from them in the summer of 1942, and the news, as he anticipated, was dire. There was little thought of his family leaving Moscow for a collective farm (an option offered to the hard-up families of leading musicians), since they feared losing

their apartment. And there was obviously no chance of escaping the cold and grinding poverty of the capital for what Soviet propaganda termed “American darkness.”

Lina, Svyatoslav, and Oleg received direct financial support from Prokofiev during the war. Atovmyan documents the amounts he transferred to them on a monthly basis from Prokofiev's publication and performance honoraria. At times, Prokofiev cut back on his own expenses in order to support his family. In Tbilisi, he and Mira briefly subsisted on just 13 rubles a day, a meager sum, until payment arrived for the String Quartet.⁷⁹ There was little available in the state-run stores and rampant inflation in the unofficial peasant markets. To persevere, Prokofiev took out a series of short-term loans from Muzfond, using the funds to help himself, his family, and those of his longtime friends who found themselves in extreme hardship.

In Tbilisi, as in Nalchik, Prokofiev devoted the bulk of his working time to *War and Peace*, but he now began to tinker with the outline, conflating two scenes (7 and 8) into one and composing the remaining ones out of order. The decision to do so, he noted, allowed him to avoid “stumbling blocks.”⁸⁰ On January 15, 1942, he completed the renumbered scene 9, which depicts the torching of Moscow by its own citizens and the freeing of Pierre; on March 20, he finished scene 11, which concerns the chaotic French flight from Russia. Only then did he turn to the intimate episode of Natasha at the bedside of the delirious, wounded Prince Andrey. In her memoirs, Mira chronicled her and Prokofiev's methodical work on the opera in minute detail:

November 17 (Nalchik): Seryozha has started the opera's seventh scene—before the Borodino battle. I rewrote the libretto of this scene for him. We selected an apt folksong from the collection *The Expulsion of Napoleon from Moscow* [*Izgnaniye Napoleona iz Moskvı*, 1938]: “Hark, the foreign locusts have already swooped down upon us” [Chu, i k nam uzh naletela inozemna sarancha]. It seems this text will be good for the chorus.



November 27 (Tbilisi): He is mulling over the seventh scene. I copied out of the novel the characteristics of several figures: Matveyev and the peasant Fyodor—whom we named ourselves—and Tikhon Shcherbatiiy. Seryozha proposes a

baritone for Matveyev, a tenor for Fyodor, and a bass for Tikhon. Fyodor derived from the cheerful red-faced soldier whom Pierre meets on the Borodino battlefield; Matveyev, from the handsome fellow whom the French executed in Moscow.⁸¹



November 30: I'm working on the opera's eleventh scene (the French retreat). The libretto is proving difficult, since it has to be borrowed and fashioned into a whole from different parts of the novel.



December 16: Recently the Nechayevs, Gauks, Aleksandrov, Massalitinova, and both N. Ya. and V. Ya. gathered at Lamm's.⁸² Seryozha played the second act of *War and Peace*. It seems to have made a strong impression. But Nikolay Yakovlevich apparently did not like Pierre, who turned out, in his words, "to be a true operatic hero—a tenor."



December 18: I worked entirely on the eighth scene (Napoleon at Shevardino Redoubt) and read the libretto to Seryozha. We decided to put the scene aside temporarily and to incorporate some changes further on.



December 20: Seryozha played through the first act of *War and Peace*. Gauk noted: "It reminded me throughout of *Eugene Onegin*, with its enormous internal purity." I finished rewriting the libretto of the ninth scene (Moscow).



December 23: I looked through Tolstoy's four Books [*War and Peace*] to make sure that I hadn't missed anything crucial for the opera. It seems the libretto now has a firm plan with the scenes following each other in logical order. The spectacle needs to be unified, even if at the painful expense of many wonderful pages. These had to be excluded owing to the impossibility of accommodating them in the opera,

even though it would be performed over two evenings. Seryozha is writing Prince Andrey's arioso for the scene Before the Battle of Borodino.



January 5: I am writing the song about Kutuzov for the scene Before the Battle of Borodino. Seryozha often asks for changes to the libretto of this scene.



January 14: Today Seryozha finished the song that opens the Moscow scene. He used authentic French material in it. Now I am faced with writing the text. Today I was occupied with the Kazak song for the Borodino scene. The song is folkloric, but I had to redo the words, in part because Seryozha assigned it a fixed meter, for which, accordingly, verses needed to be written. He jokingly calls me "my Baron Rosen," a reference to Glinka's librettist, who often had to write to preassigned meters. Seryozha at first indicated the alternation of strong and weak syllables in his meters—"U"—for me, but later on this seemed too imprecise. Two additional signs were needed: a strong-weak "U" for those syllables with a medium accent, and "=" for those strong syllables that mark the peak of the phrase. Seryozha placed some of the weak syllables in brackets, which meant that I could use them or not use them as I saw fit; put another way, Seryozha could either add a note in these places or, alternately, assign a single syllable to two slurred notes. If a certain place required an open sound, he added to the relevant measure the letter "a," which precluded the use of syllables with the letters "i" and "u." When I wrote the song about the Kazaks we talked about the coarseness of the rhyme between "Kazaki" and "v drake" ["Kazaks" and "in a fight"], but since it exists in an 1812 folksong we decided to keep it.⁸³

Beyond Mira's continuing education in the art of text setting, these select remarks attest to the surefootedness of Prokofiev's initial approach to *War and Peace*, despite occasional demurring from colleagues. They also reveal

that, from the start, he intended the opera to be a two-evening production that captured at least something of the scope of Tolstoy's novel. The thematic parallels between the first and second half of the opera needed to be explicit, Prokofiev realized, in order for audiences to perceive them. Moreover, Mira's reference to *The Expulsion of Napoleon from Moscow*—and, elsewhere, Mikhaïl Bragin's 1941 *Field Marshal Kutuzov* (*Polkovodets Kutuzov*)—indicates that the decision to enhance the patriotic content of the opera stemmed as much from the composer and his co-librettist as it did from the bureaucrats who would, in the period ahead, adjudicate it.

Prokofiev kept Khrapchenko apprised of his progress with the score, alerting him, on December 1, 1941, that he had completed the first and second acts (scenes 1–6), and notifying him of the imminent completion of the third and fourth acts on March 29, 1942. In between the two updates came the first concrete news on the whereabouts of Mira's parents (they had evacuated to Samarkand, Uzbekistan) and on the well-being of Prokofiev's family. The composer learned that his cousin Katya urgently needed material support, and he immediately arranged to transfer 200 rubles a month to her. Progress on *War and Peace* continued despite a week-long excursion, at the beginning of February, to Baku, Azerbaijan, where Prokofiev performed for a packed audience of servicemen at an army cultural club, and for a smaller general audience at the Philharmonic.

Prokofiev hastily arranged these concerts following the outbreak of an epidemic in Tbilisi, forcing him and Mira to vacate their hotel, which, the management told them, required decontamination. The trip to Baku provided an unexpected benefit: the directors of the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater (Azgosopera), having heard about *War and Peace*, arranged a hearing of select scenes for March 2. Their interest in the opera, expressed by letter and telegram, spurred Prokofiev to complete it quickly. For dramaturgical advice, he turned to the musicologist Semyon Shlifshteyn, who was then serving as the senior consultant for music on the Committee on Arts Affairs.⁸⁴ Shlifshteyn lauded the “coordination of the music of the waltzes [which were extracted, as Gauk picked up, from *Eugene Onegin*] with the dramatic action” in scene 3, but recommended a reconception of scene 10 to include a much more explicit musical depiction of the burning of Moscow. Prokofiev took the advice, but decided against symphonic portraiture in the scene in favor of additional choral writing. He assigned Mira the meter for a central Chorus of Muscovites, which she began with the words “Our white-walled mother city” (*matushka nasha belokamennaya*).

Near the end of the scene he added another chorus, “In the dark and moonless night” (V nochku tyomnuyu i nemesyachnu), whose text derived from various “folksongs composed in 1812.” Shlifshteyn lauded these changes, but then recommended an aggrandizement of scene 7. Heeding the request, Prokofiev excised the original opening folksong (“Hark, the foreign locusts have already swooped down upon us”) and replaced it with a “large choral and symphonic episode” that necessitated, to Mira’s chagrin, a complete rewrite of the libretto.

Though the opera remained incomplete, Prokofiev returned with it to Baku for the prearranged March 2 run-through. A larger than expected audience attended his recital of the finished scenes and discussion of the unfinished ones. (Prokofiev was embarrassed by the turnout, since, owing to a “shortage of nightingales,” he had to warble through all of the vocal parts on his own.) Mira described the “plan for the libretto” of scene 11. She completed this libretto in the days ahead with the assistance of passages extracted from the hedonistic, bravado-laden memoirs of Denis Davidov, a writer-soldier during the 1812 Patriotic War (he led a hussar regiment and was later promoted to the rank of lieutenant general in the tsar’s command). The writing process assumed circular contours, with Mira consulting a jingoistic source—Davidov’s *Diary of Partisans’ Deeds in the Year 1812* (*Dnevnik partizanskikh deystviy 1812 goda*, 1838) that Tolstoy himself had used.

The event was a success, and the directors of the Opera and Ballet Theater appeared eager to stage the entire opera. (An official hearing would be arranged in Baku for June 1.) There followed two weeks of revisions, and a further two weeks of discussion between Prokofiev and his colleagues as to whether the score required abbreviation: Myaskovsky convinced Prokofiev not to make even the slightest of cuts. On March 18, Prokofiev capped the highly cinematic overture, which had, in his words, “fermented unconsciously” for the entire day. It featured at its core “the theme of the peasant militia and Kutuzov,” against which sounded melodic fragments associated with “Pierre’s anxious thoughts, the poetic hopes of Prince Andrey, and the tearful Natasha.” *War and Peace* merited a grandiose unveiling, but neither Baku nor the other city involved in the discussions about the premiere (Yerevan, Armenia) could, Prokofiev suspected, be counted on to realize it. He placed his hopes for a premiere on the Soviet cultural capitals, but in the mid- and postwar periods those hopes would be repeatedly negated.

Cinematic and Theatrical Diversion

During the period of his evacuation, Prokofiev weighed proposals to compose music for several films, and, despite his immersion in *War and Peace*, fantasized about other operatic projects, the most provocative being a large-scale revision of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the dialogue scenes either trimmed (Prokofiev asked Mira to decide where cuts might be made) or replaced with musical numbers in the style of his own Classical Symphony.⁸⁵ Despite regular address changes, occasional shortages of food, perpetual and frustrating shortages of manuscript paper,⁸⁶ constant worry about the welfare of family and friends, and a worsening of the headaches that had plagued him throughout his adult years,⁸⁷ he managed to compose more music in less time than at any other point in his career. Personal contentment abetted his labors, as did liberation from bureaucratic chores: the more he traveled, the more he lived for himself. Eclipsing his prodigious prewar levels of productivity, he fulfilled simultaneous commissions for disparate cinematic and theatrical works.

As he steeled himself for the first adjudication, in Moscow, of the piano score of *War and Peace*, he received an invitation from Eisenstein to relocate to Alma-Ata, nicknamed “Hollywood on the border of China,” to collaborate on a projected two-part film about Ivan the Terrible. (The letter was hand-delivered to him in Tbilisi on March 23, four months after Eisenstein wrote it.) Taking into account the growing success of *Alexander Nevsky*—just the day before, he and Mira had been writing an article to be published before the April 28 New York City screening—Prokofiev accepted Eisenstein's invitation with enthusiasm.⁸⁸ He and Mira left Tbilisi for Alma-Ata on May 29, arriving there, after an exhaustingly protracted trip involving many stops, on June 15.⁸⁹ The Ivan the Terrible project, which occupied Prokofiev on and off between 1942 and 1946, differed markedly from the other propagandistic films for which he provided music during the war: *Kotovsky*, *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*, and *Tonya*. Prokofiev also worked on an oft-postponed pseudo-biographical film about the Romantic poet Mikhaïl Lermontov, who was killed in a duel at age twenty-seven, breathtakingly young given his artistic accomplishments.

Kotovsky involves simple people receiving an education in the Leninist concept of justified warfare. This principle is felt before it is thought of as part of an intuited communal consensus. The positive characters in the film—like the positive characters in *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*—experience a political revelation, one that might be coarsely compared to the spiritual

revelation experienced by Konstantin Levin, the central figure in Tolstoy's great novel *Anna Karenina*. Near the end of the novel, Levin finally discovers the "truth," the "certainty" that he has long "needed but could not find for himself—a collective certainty, a universal agreement, beyond reason."⁹⁰ The "certainty" in this instance is faith-based: fulfillment resides in service to the greater good, to the divine potential of human endeavor. Levin, however, is a pre-revolutionary private landowner, not the manager of a Soviet collective farm or a munitions plant. Although he speaks with ever-greater conviction about the divine and the cosmic, his philosophy has a private, intimate dimension. In *Kotovskiy*, as in *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*, the pursuit of the good is defined using abstract public slogans: the progressive building of socialism, the subsequent striving toward communism. The individual stages on the path to the ideal are marked by increasing political awareness and the overcoming of internal and external obstacles.

The central question raised by the two films concerns their status as art. Beauty in the metaphysical sense of the term is absent, but these films fulfill the duties that Stalinist critics assigned to artistic creation. The films are not intended to entertain but to inform, to instruct; they replace aesthetic experience with ideological enlightenment and learning through example. "Art" in this sense consists of communicating a proper model for consciousness, and of promoting party-line conceptions of the good, the moral, and the just. Under Stalin, art was wrested away from the guidance of a communal consensus and placed in the hands of particular individuals, the chairmen of the Committee on Arts Affairs, who wielded great power over the artists under their control. The definitions of the good, the moral, and the just had bureaucratic origins.

Kotovskiy purports to represent separate episodes in the real life of Grigoriy Kotovskiy, a rough-edged, Chapayev-like rebel fighter from an agricultural region of Moldova and Ukraine known as Bessarabia.⁹¹ After leading a peasant revolt against Ukrainian landowners in 1905–6, Kotovskiy joined the Bolshevik movement, eventually becoming the equivalent of a general in the Red Army (technically speaking, the rank of general was not introduced into the Red Army until 1940). For his harsh actions against White Russians in the post-revolutionary civil war, he earned pride of place in the annals of Soviet history.

Prokofiev received the commission for the film from the director Fayntsimmer, with whom he had collaborated on *Lieutenant Kizhe* in 1933 and 1934. *Kotovskiy* was one of three patriotic films released by the Alma-Ata

studios in recognition of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution.⁹² It was scripted by the Stalin Prize-winning writer Aleksey Kapler and starred the Stalin Prize-winning actor Nikolay Mordvinov. The plotline highlights Kotovsky's recognition of the cause, his moment of sureness, which inspires him to take up arms. He avoids what seems to be certain execution, escapes from prison, and leads a peasant militia to victory after victory in his Bessarabian homeland.

Kotovsky's devotion to his place of origins attests in the film to his status as a paragon of simple values, natural essences. The structural dominant of the film's soundtrack is an artificial, rather than authentic, folk tune, which sounds whenever the hero appears on screen or whenever his homeland is invoked. As the musicologist E. A. Vishnevetskaya points out, the "Bessarabian Song," which Prokofiev set to a straightforward text by Mira, stereotypically stresses the sixth and seventh scale degrees of the natural minor scale and the intervals of the perfect fourth and fifth.⁹³ It is first sung by the chorus, after which the melody mutates to different orchestral instruments, each charged with illustrating a separate element of Kotovsky's psychology. The uniqueness of the music lies in the manner in which it was recorded: Prokofiev instructed that the first clarinet, the flute, and the first bassoon be placed directly in front of the microphone to emphasize what Vishnevetskaya calls their "pastoral" timbre. He—or perhaps Fayntsimmer—also wanted the music to be performed with microtonal inflections, although these do not appear in the actual score.⁹⁴

In the battle scenes, Kotovsky is represented both by the "Bessarabian Song" and a solo trumpet fanfare. The latter is heard in the background during the scene in which Kotovsky and his ideological teacher—Kharitonov—are freed from prison. The soundtrack crackles with "hurrahs" and includes fragments of two revolutionary songs, the "Marseillaise" and "Varshavyanka."⁹⁵

The hackneyed quotations attest to Prokofiev's dutiful, if uninspired, approach to this film, which appears to have occupied very little of his attention during his time in Alma-Ata. The film was shot in the summer of 1942, a period in which, as noted, the composer was involved in several unrelated projects. The multitasking resulted in some unusual cross-relations. For the card game scene in *Kotovsky*, for example, Prokofiev decided to include a waltz that he had actually conceived and earmarked for act 1 of *Cinderella*. Titled "Cinderella's Departure for the Ball," the waltz provides ambience for an episode in the film that begins frivolously but ends menacingly. The evil landowner Karakozin is confronted by Kotovsky, who demands the return

of the money that has been stolen from the peasant workers—money that the landowner and his associates, including a local priest, have squandered playing cards. The episode ends in violent mayhem, with Kotovsky freeing imprisoned workers and setting the landowner's villa ablaze.

Prokofiev re-scored the waltz for chamber orchestra, providing the cinematic version with a more “salon-like” sound.⁹⁶ The inclusion of an aristocratic genre within the episode establishes a contrast between the debased, decadent world of the landowners and the progressive, promising world of the rebels. In the ballet, the waltz is associated with Cinderella's desire for an escape into romance, and her entry into a realm of beauty that has the potential to transform life. This latter notion, embodied in the music and dance of an escapist work, runs counter to the aims of propagandistic films like *Kotovsky*, which privilege the practical over the sublime.

On October 3, 1942, Prokofiev provided a summary of his activities to Myaskovsky, who had been relocated to the high-altitude city of Frunze (now Bishkek), the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Prokofiev commented specifically on his work for the Alma-Ata studios, rather crudely boasting that “film work is engaging, profitable, and does not require much creative exertion, and Alma-Ata is a pleasant city full of money. Besides films, I am writing a small dramatic cantata and received a commission from Moscow for a sonata for flute and piano.”⁹⁷ Though he described his activities in carefree terms, the composer took on the bulk of his film work out of a practical need to support his wife and sons, who were living in dangerous and uncertain conditions in Moscow. Indeed, no sooner had he completed *Kotovsky* than he turned his attention to *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe* and *Tonya*. He also had to contend with *Lermontov: Pages from the Biography of the Great Russian Poet* (*Lermontov: Stranitsi biografii velikogo russkogo poeta*). This last film was conceived long before the onset of the war. Upon departing Moscow, Prokofiev had every reason to think that he had finished with it; *Lermontov* proved, however, to be the most nettlesome, least rewarding project of his evacuation.

Death and the Poet

For the centenary of Lermontov's death, as for the centenary of Pushkin's, Soviet cultural agencies planned lavish tributes, the ulterior motive being the poet's reconceptualization along proto-revolutionary lines. On May 15, 1941, in Moscow, Prokofiev accepted a proposal to write the music for a

stylized cinematic treatment of Lermontov's life. The mastermind of the project was a dashing young director named Albert Gendelshteyn, who in 1935 had collaborated with Shostakovich on the civil war film *Love and Hatred* (*Lyubov' i nenavist'*) and who seemed assured of a distinguished career. The script of *Lermontov* was written by the dramatist Konstantin Paustovsky, who based it on one of his own plays.

For Prokofiev, work on the project proceeded swiftly, though the same could not be said for his collaborators. Within a month, he had completed a piano score for the film and had enlisted Lamm to realize the orchestration.⁹⁸ Gendelshteyn, however, lagged with the filming. By June, he had shot only the indoor scenes of *Lermontov*; he had not yet relocated, as the subject matter demanded, to the North Caucasus to shoot the outdoor scenes. His tardiness sparked a miniature scandal in Soviet cinema circles, with one critic making it his mission to track the amount of money that the project was overbudget and to document the perceived ineptitude of the crew.⁹⁹

With the outbreak of war on June 22, 1941, activity in the cultural industries came to a temporary halt, and Gendelshteyn was forced to rethink *Lermontov* from start to finish. Paustovsky made use of the hiatus to draft a new version of the script, one that, in response to his own critics, placed increased stress on the poet's nationalism and excised emotion from his death scene.¹⁰⁰ The script received official approval in February 1942, at which point work on the film resumed. Prokofiev turned his attention back to the film in late May, while stationed in Tbilisi.

In the revised script, Lermontov is transformed from a dissolute fop into a heroic Russian patriot. He is represented as a key figure in the campaign to defend and expand the nation's southern borders. Having been dispatched by Tsar Nikolay I to serve in the Tenginsky infantry regiment, the poet defies his hesitant commander to lead a charge against fortified Circassian positions. Lermontov crosses a treacherous mountain pass on his trusty steed, all the while evading lethal volleys from above and to the side. Based on this and other battle scenes, one of the film's reviewers compared the poet's creative legacy to that of a brave Red Army soldier. "There exists in our army a fine and wise tradition (it began in the Tenginsky regiment, where Lermontov served as a lieutenant): if a soldier dies a hero, his name is heard along with the names of the living at morning and evening roll call." Just in case the point is missed, the author of the review repeats that, like a great soldier, a great poet "is immortalized in the memories of the living."¹⁰¹

Prokofiev's May 23, 1942, cue sheet contains twenty musical numbers, the most important from a narrative standpoint being the polonaise, quadrille, and three waltzes ("Youth," "Mephisto," and "High Society") of the two ballroom scenes.¹⁰² He also composed a contradanse for the film, but it is not listed on the cue sheet, and evidently dates from a later phase in the writing process.¹⁰³ For the early scene depicting Pushkin's death, Prokofiev conceived a series of stark chords, each punctuated with a portentous pause. Later in the film, he planned to quote both from court music of the period and from an old soldier's song, "How delightful the Moscow road" (Moskovskaya slavna put'-dorozhen'ka).¹⁰⁴ The court music quotation would have prefaced the scene in which Lermontov, having fallen into disfavor with the son of the French ambassador Ernst de Barant, accepts a challenge to a duel, which ends in a feeble draw. The soldier's song quotation would have followed the scene in which the Tsar, having grown tired of the irreverent, recalcitrant poet, sends him to the Caucasus to serve in the Tenginsky regiment. Prokofiev sought to reprise the "Youth" Waltz in the scene set in the spa of Pyatigorsk, where Lermontov stops for rheumatism treatment en route to the regiment. The tragic climax of the film finds the poet involved in a dispute with Nikolay Mart'nov, a retired officer. Less out of wounded pride than long-standing hatred for the poet, Mart'nov challenges him to a duel with pistols, the result being Lermontov's ignoble death. For these scenes, Prokofiev conceived two passages of music, the first relating the poet's "spiritual state before the duel," which is "not tragic, but life-affirming." The second passage would have "derived from the music of Pushkin's death."¹⁰⁵ The fates of the two writers are immortalized as one.

The cue sheet also specifies a quotation from *La Muette de Portici* (*The Mute Girl of Portici*, 1828) by Daniel Auber. The curious decision to borrow from this opera came not from Prokofiev but Paustovsky, who set the third scene of the film (and the source play) at a St. Petersburg summer theater where *La Muette de Portici* is playing. Lingering at the entrance to the theater, Lermontov muses on the state of affairs in Russia with his friends. His elevated speech strikes the fancy of two aristocratic ladies:

LERMONTOV: One recent night, I went on horseback to Tsarskoye. A thunderstorm was approaching. Before me in the darkness stood large, thick crops, thickets of century-old trees ascended, and it seemed to me that I was moving through a prosperous nation destined for happiness.

FIRST LADY: How poetic!

SECOND LADY: Extraordinary!

LERMONTOV (smirking): But the summer lightning flashed very brightly, and I saw each ear of wheat in the dusty fields. The ears of wheat were few and meager. Thus the illusion of a prosperous and happy nation vanished.¹⁰⁶

Throughout the script, Paustovsky emphasizes Lermontov's disdain for the St. Petersburg elite. (In the scene quoted above, the banter, dress, and pretentious mannerisms of the theatergoers are subject to scrutiny.) Disregard for the theatrical artifice of aristocratic life is contrasted with positive portrayal of the natural world, which serves as a somewhat tired metaphor for harmonious social relationships and inner peace. In keeping with the standard readings of Lermontov's creativity, Paustovsky asserts that the poet found a balance and harmony in the natural world that he could not find in his interpersonal relationships. In the film, nature serves as the poet's muse and ally: his death, unmarked by his colleagues, provokes thunder and lightning.

The reference to Auber's *La Muette de Portici* in the film, moreover, places Lermontov's thinking in a proto-revolutionary context. The opera concerns an uprising against a corrupt aristocratic order, and portrays a mute peasant girl, someone who communicates through gesture alone, as the voice of progressive moral and social values. The libretto for *La Muette de Portici* was rejected by French censors, who insisted on changes to the plot and characters. This fact was not lost on Paustovsky, who represents, within his script, Lermontov's various feuds with the Russian imperial censors.

On May 25, 1942, Prokofiev wrote to Gendelshteyn expressing his happiness that work on *Lermontov* had resumed following the relocation of the assigned studio for the film (Soyuzdetfilm) to Stalinabad (Dushanbe), Tajikistan. Prokofiev lamented, however, that the news had reached him on the eve of his departure from Tbilisi to Alma-Ata. He assured the director that he would finish the music for the ball scenes, adding that the director could, if needed, increase the length of the dances by reprising their openings. The first sign of their eventual falling out comes when Prokofiev beseeches Gendelshteyn to restore the first scene of the film, which had been excised from the rewritten scenario, but which the composer found "very effective," since he had managed to use the melancholy melody he had quoted from *La Muette de Portici* in the leitmotif of Lermontov's immortal beloved (Varvara

Lopukhina).¹⁰⁷ Prokofiev ends the letter by reporting that a portion of the score had evidently become lost in transit from Tbilisi to Stalinabad. He asks that his assistant Lamm be paid an additional 200 rubles to reconstruct it.

Gendelshteyn's June 18 reply exasperated Prokofiev. The director reported that the theater scene could not be restored, and then asserted that, of the music Prokofiev had sent to him, only the "Mephisto" Waltz and the quadrille suited his needs. Gendelshteyn concluded that the polonaise lacked the imperial majesty merited by the St. Petersburg setting. The director also requested that the "Youth" Waltz, which Prokofiev had decided to remove from *Lermontov* and assign to *War and Peace*, be returned to it.¹⁰⁸ Prokofiev refused, and then inflamed the situation by offering a critique of Gendelshteyn's revised musical plan for the film, which included, in his words, "a heap of trifles" that no listener would be able to remember.¹⁰⁹ Prokofiev proposed that the film include only two waltzes and one polonaise to make the soundtrack more accessible and memorable. He pointed out that, in his experience, the varied repetition of a small cluster of themes over the course of a film enhanced its narrative flow.

There ensued a dispute over Gendelshteyn's decision to combine four numbers from the soundtrack into one. Prokofiev unnecessarily reminded the director that the film would be edited several times before its release, and thus the soundtrack should remain as adjustable, or "portable," as possible. "Your method would work if your montage was carved out of stone once and for all," he declared, "but this doesn't happen in the film business."¹¹⁰ Then, in a July 11 letter, Prokofiev critiqued the visual content of the film. Upon reading the revised script, he griped that it was rife with historical inaccuracies, or "blunders," particularly when it came to the depiction of the habits and decorum of the Russian nobility. "Children," he remarked, "would not be allowed to play race-and-catch at a gathering where dignitaries like [Lermontov's benefactor Count] Benkendorf play cards."¹¹¹ Gendelshteyn pledged to correct the mistakes.

In their subsequent letters, Gendelshteyn continued to press Prokofiev about the "Youth" Waltz, but Prokofiev remained adamant about not restoring it to the film. "Alas," he told the director,

that which has deceased cannot be resurrected, for it has crossed once and forever and conclusively into another world. Back in April, I presented the opera *War and Peace* (in which the waltz plays a very significant role) to the

Committee on Arts Affairs. It was first heard by [Khrapchenko's assistant Aleksandr] Solodovnikov, and then by Khrapchenko and [the conductor Samuil] Samosud, and then accepted and approved for staging. Now that a number of theaters are heading into rehearsals, it is no longer possible to consider using the waltz material to other ends.¹¹²

In fact, Prokofiev was vastly overstating the rehearsal situation, and in an effort to appease Gendelshteyn, the composer came up with a second “Youth” Waltz for him, but Gendelshteyn considered it unsuitably repetitive. The relationship between them sank to name-calling:

I hope that the public, hearing the waltz in the film, will disagree with the cantankerous director. Perhaps you haven't learned, or more likely, that I haven't explained to you one aspect of my conception, namely that, when in the further development of the plot this waltz has to serve as a leitmotif, illustrating deeper moods, I will change it accordingly, in the same fashion that I changed the theme that I sent to you from [*La Muette de Portici*], whose original version sounds relatively superficial.¹¹³

Upset that Gendelshteyn had twice criticized his music, Prokofiev was all too happy to tell him on November 16, 1942, that he could not travel to Stalinabad to complete the score, since he had undertaken another film project, *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*, for the Ukrainian-born director Igor Savchenko, which would require him to travel to Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan. Prokofiev suggested that Vasiliy Nechayev, a composer in desperate need of work, be enlisted to complete *Lermontov*. Contact between Prokofiev and Gendelshteyn ceased. The director did not in the end hire Nechayev, who was living alongside Myaskovsky in distant Frunze, to finish what Prokofiev had begun. He instead entrusted the task to Venedikt Pushkov, a little-known composer who had the advantage of already being in Stalinabad and involved with the studio.

Mired in theater projects, and overwhelmed by the succession of acceptable and unacceptable commissions for propaganda films, Prokofiev opted—as in the case of *Kotovsky*—to sacrifice creativity for expediency. In *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*, he recycled entire sections of his orchestral suite

The Year 1941, made elaborate use of a well-known Ukrainian folksong, and quoted the iconic melody of the “Internationale.” He also included thematically related material from his opera *Semyon Kotko*, which bore the scars of a traumatic period in his career, but which, his colleagues constantly reminded him, merited revival. The opening cello melody of act 1, scene 1, which shows Semyon returning to his Ukrainian birthplace after four years at the Romanian front, became the music for the grave scene in *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*. As Vishnevetskaya points out, Prokofiev first recycles the melody intact, and then transposes it up an octave, into the register of a lament. To further enhance its tragic pathos, he adds a tonic pedal point in the brass and a restless eighth-note pattern in the inner clarinet line.¹¹⁴

Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe narrates a struggle between pro-Soviet Ukrainians and an invading German regiment for control of their land. The collective-farmer hero of the film bears much in common with the village-farmer hero of *Semyon Kotko*. Similar parallels can be found between the positive and negative figures in each work. The principal difference concerns the time of the action: the film is set at the beginning of a fictionalized World War II, whereas the opera unfolds at the end of a fictionalized World War I. Led by Salivon Chasnik, the director of a collective farm, the partisans first seek to thwart, and then to avenge, the ransacking of their village by the Germans. Salivon loses his crops in the rampage, and takes out his ire on the self-serving speculator Dolgonosik, who has colluded with the Germans against the partisans. Salivon confronts Dolgonosik, in the act of fleecing hapless peasants of their possessions, and forces him to hang himself, since he is not worth the cost of a single bullet made by an honest worker.

The film is cast in three episodes, each introduced by a Ukrainian peasant chorus, whose strains can be heard over the battle noises. The singing carries through the scene of the burning of the crops and, later, the scene in which the peasants, having been forced by the Germans to dig their own graves, are executed by a firing squad. Salivon's wife, Pelageya, is among the victims.

The dismal struggle attains a climax in the middle episode. Singing a folksong at the top of his lungs, a grizzled, bearded partisan named Taras lures the gullible Germans, pied piper-like, into a minefield.¹¹⁵ Following the slaughter, the exhausted, wounded old man returns to his hideout. Before falling asleep, he tucks his remaining grenades under his body, a final gesture of self-defense. He is discovered by a stone-faced German officer, who

expresses disbelief that Taras has acted alone. The officer kicks him in disgust, and the grenades explode. The final scene of the film cuts from the charred Ukrainian steppe to the snow-covered Kremlin. It is the anniversary of the Revolution. Over the radio, Salivon hears a morale-boosting speech by Stalin. The voice of the “father of the peoples” carries over hill and dale, and spurs Salivon and his peasant brigade to keep up the fight.

The mind-numbing plot structure of the film is underscored by the varied repetitions of Taras’s folksong, first on the diegetic level, as a symbol of the old man’s cunning revolve, and then on the nondiegetic level, as a marker of the inbred heroism of the Soviet (Ukrainian) people. Prokofiev assigns two partial versions of the folksong melody to the violins.¹¹⁶ The playful character of the second version—it unfolds in scherzando thirty-second notes—contradicts the sober events unfolding on the screen; one senses that the music, like Taras, is in a state of denial. Taras sings the folksong in a cheerful, energetic manner; his pluckiness illustrates that he is younger than the young, much in the same way that Lenin, according to a Soviet slogan, was “more alive than the living.”¹¹⁷ Having shared his political insights with Salivon, the old man escorts the Germans to their death, fully aware that the deception will cost him his own life. The absorption of the folksong into the film’s background scoring evinces that Taras’s heroism will not be forgotten. It is the embodiment of *zeitgeist*, of the inexorable movement of history through the Revolution, the civil war, and World War II to Communist utopia.

Prokofiev, as noted, did not dwell on *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*; his approach to the film was as schematic as the plotline—a point borne out by the autograph score of the grave scene, in which the composer dovetails a self-quotation from *Semyon Kotko* into one from *The Year 1941*.

Tonya

Excluding the Eisenstein projects, the most striking, if obscure, of Prokofiev’s wartime films is *Tonya*, which stars the stage and screen actress Valentina Karavayeva, who earned instant celebrity (and a Stalin Prize) for her touching, magnetic performance in the contemporaneous *Little Masha* (*Mashenka*, 1942). The scenario of *Tonya* was written by Boris Brodsky for Prokofiev and the prolific director Abram Room. Although it was filmed and flown from Alma-Ata to Moscow for presentation to cultural officials, it was not released to the general public, for reasons that remain somewhat unclear.

Brodsky drafted the scenario in the spring of 1942, thereafter forwarding it for approval to the Committee on Cinema Affairs. After two readings the Committee told Brodsky that the scenario was "Good!" but needed to be "shorter and tenser," with "more meaningful short phrases."¹¹⁸ Even before this verdict was reached, however, Brodsky had begun to rethink his text, excising one of the battle scenes and collating lines of dialogue, the result being a terse script for a thirty-two-minute film.

The scenario emphasizes person-to-person dialogue, a consequence of its original conception as a radio drama. Tonya works long, exhausting hours as a telephone operator, a position that requires fast fingers and multitasking, but no physical labor. We soon learn that she has a physical handicap, a stunted leg that has prevented her from enlisting in the Red Army. Tonya works with a girlfriend, Klava, who is as unmotivated as she is unappealing, and who ties up the phone lines flirting with male callers. There are two other characters of significance: Tonya's husband, Vasilii Stepanovich, a newly recruited gunner for the Red Army, and Tikhon Petrovich, an old Bolshevik who oversees the operations of a train station.

The action takes place in an unnamed Soviet town, which has a telephone office, a train station, and a square lined with leafy trees. Tonya takes a break from work to stroll with her humorless, steel-willed husband, who announces his departure for the front, and enjoins Tonya to seek help with her day-to-day responsibilities from the station master. The next scene shows her going for another walk, this time with the stationmaster, who seeks to assure her of the value of her work to the Soviet cause. "If I was whole," Tonya comments in reference to her handicap, "you know I'd have gone to the front. But I'm only a telephone operator." The old Bolshevik fumes: "Banish those thoughts! They're good for nothing! Shameful, truly!"¹¹⁹ Later, back at work, Tonya hears startling news: German soldiers have invaded the town, and the populace has begun to evacuate. Klava takes the first train out. The stationmaster takes the last train, but not before pleading with Tonya to leave with him. She tries three times to leave, but the switchboard continues to light up, and her dedication keeps her on the job.

The drama of the ruthless German takeover of the town is manifest in a series of chaotic telephone calls to a factory, a school, a hospital, even the NKVD. The commander of the local Red Army battalion phones in. Perplexed to learn that Tonya is alone, he asks her to serve as an advance post for the Soviet counterattack. "Describe everything you see from the window," he beseeches her, "but please don't be too afraid." "I'm not afraid,"

Tonya deadpans. "I'll look around once more, just don't leave the phone."¹²⁰ Peering through bullet holes, she pinpoints the locations of the German soldiers. The coordinates are relayed by the commander to his chief gunner, none other than Tonya's husband.

Soviet mortars explode with unexpected precision in the town square, destroying the German ordnance and filling the skies with debris and smoke. Tonya is thrown from wall to wall in the telephone office, but manages, despite near loss of consciousness, to retain contact with the regiment. Her husband grimaces as he orders the gunners to fire, for he recognizes that his wife's fate is in his hands. Despite the din of the battle—the sound of shattering glass and collapsing walls—Tonya's voice is overheard by a German soldier who has descended the damaged staircase behind her desk. Brandishing a rifle, the intruder orders her to shut down the switchboard. Tonya ignores the order, choosing instead to inform her husband, "I'm alive, Vasya, I'm all here. You haven't left? You're doing swell. Keep beating them, Vasik."¹²¹ Tonya is shot at point-blank range; the sound of the rifle reverberates down the telephone line.

The film's denouement involves the Soviet retaking of the town and a closing episode at Tonya's gravesite. Ringed by an honor guard, the commander affixes one of his own medals, the Order of the Red Star, to the gravestone. Tonya's husband keeps shell-shocked vigil during the eulogies. One of the soldiers describes the martyred heroine "as tall and shapely, like a poplar tree, and beautiful."¹²²

Even from this brief synopsis, it will be clear that Brodsky's scenario furnishes a convincing example of Socialist Realism, which became the official method for Soviet cinema in January 1935. It centers on a figure who, heeding the advice of a stern ideological tutor, overcomes her anatomical and psychological inhibitions to play a significant role in Soviet military history. Excluding the heroine, the characters in the film are stock types whose dependent thought processes reflect class consciousness. For the positive figures, there is no room for foreboding and second-guessing: Vasilii pulls the trigger knowing that Tonya might be in the line of fire; the stationmaster keeps the trains running even as tanks shell them. The scenario involves simple metaphors: a change in the weather augurs the German invasion; the town's trees, under which Tonya first kissed her husband, are torched in the Soviet invasion. The socialist realist emphasis on comprehensibility (*dostupnost' massam*) is manifest in the direct visual contrast between the storm-cloud-covered German offensive and the sunshine-drenched Soviet counteroffensive. This

counteroffensive unfolds with improbable ease, and then cuts to the extended epilogue at the graveside, where the political lessons of the film are stressed, and viewers are expected to reflect on the visual events for their own ideological betterment.

From this simple, even banal start, the scenario was subject to considerable manipulation, first by Room and then Prokofiev. The director and composer developed an audio-visual outline for the film that altered the sequence of events and the behavior of the characters. Klava was renamed Katya, and assigned a sidekick, Anya, who both bid a worried farewell to Tonya in the opening scenes. So as not to overstress the dullness of Tonya's telephone office duties, Room moved the narrative swiftly into the battle scenes through the use of inset titles. The second shot sequence, "The Russian People Abandon the Town" bleeds into the third, "The Dugout." The former shows the stationmaster gathering his belongings (the most valuable being a portrait of Gorky, credited with inventing Socialist Realism); the latter introduces us to the commander of the Red Army and Tonya's husband. Tonya appears as if in a dream in the action scenes, rising from a faint as the Germans begin their attack and whispering to her spouse in the shadows during the Soviet response. At the end of the film (during a long-distance, medium-range, and then close-up shot sequence titled "Tonya's Grave") the heroine's photograph comes to life and she is heard saluting her husband for his bravery.

However clichéd, the nonreality of this episode brings to mind one of Room's early experimental films, the little-known formalist masterpiece *A Strict Youth* (*Strogiy Yunosha*). Completed in 1936, at the onset of the Stalinist purges, this film was banned for ideological flaws, the most blatant being the representation of a future society whose citizens doubt, rather than uphold, totalitarian ideals. The film scholar Jerry Heil interprets it as an "undelimited dream-state... with a central 'dream-within-the-dream' of extreme artifice."¹²³ Heil notes that, following Room's denunciation, the director ended his flirtation with formalist methods: his subsequent films *Squadron No. 5* (*Eskadril'ya No. 5*, 1939) and *Wind from the East* (*Veter s Vostoka*, 1940) solidly promote wartime values. *Tonya* further attests to Room's change in direction.

It is nonetheless arguable that the ending of *Tonya* bears a trace of *A Strict Youth*. The "extreme artifice" of the grave scene betrays two other general features of Room's style: his reliance on words, rather than images, to ground his films in reality, and his stress on the texture of the voice to communicate psychological characteristics.¹²⁴ The central

episodes of *Tonya*, moreover, are cyclical in nature, with the same telephone calls being made over and over again, taking on greater nuance and feeling.

Although *Tonya* symbolizes the bedraggled motherland and its bedraggled inhabitants, their presence is not actually felt in the film. The Soviet people—often depicted in artworks of the period as a suffering but resistant entity—do not play a role in *Tonya*: they are neither seen on-screen, in the diegetic realm, nor are they heard off-screen, in the nondiegetic realm. In accord with the pro-female orientation of Room's previous, full-length films, the nineteen-year-old heroine of *Tonya* is a physically weak but mentally robust figure.¹²⁵ She becomes an ideal, yet not abstract, emblem of the future perfect Soviet citizen, a model for 1942 filmgoers to adopt. She does not mimic the wartime struggle of the Soviet masses; rather, through the example of her heroism, she defines this struggle.

Like the *Tonya* cue sheet, which is included as Appendix B of this book, the score bears a September 1942 date. Prokofiev did not realize the orchestration himself, but as was his time-saving habit, enlisted Lamm for the task. His draft plan for the score (jotted down on an envelope glorifying Stalin), had ten parts:

1. Military march, then [the music of] the heroine, 50 seconds
2. [Tonya descends the] stairwell
3. Song, 160 seconds
4. Kat[ya] (from the overture), exit of the second girl (similar)
5. Military interlude, entrance of the Russians ("Tonya, it's you!")
6. Third military interlude
7. Train departure: the Russians abandon their hometown
8. The German pulls out his notebook
9. Tonya's death—5 convulsions
10. Graveside honor guard¹²⁶

With the exception of the third item on the list, the song, this plan follows the plot of the film. The opening phrases of the song, which Prokofiev included in his *Seven Mass Songs* of 1942 under the title "A Warrior's Love" (Lyubov' voina), saturate the entire score.¹²⁷

Upon conversing with Room, Prokofiev expanded and extended the score, adding an overture, a second farewell episode, and military action motives. The latter include a five-measure trumpet fanfare used for the

scrolling text sequences, and ascending chromatic scale segments used for the stock footage of Soviet cannons being moved into position. The invading Germans, unsurprisingly, are represented by a repeating, one-measure motive built around the interval of the augmented second, a symbol, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian music, of preternatural malevolence.

Prokofiev's emphasis, however, was clearly on the song, which he doubled in length while revising the draft score, and which he used in different textless variations in different scenes. When the film was edited, footage featuring the song was cut and the score lost cohesion. In an October 20, 1942, letter to Abram Mendelson, Prokofiev discussed the cut:

The director Room finished his film *Tonya*, but the artistic council [*khudozhestvenniiy sovet*] cut 200 meters, and the song to Mira's words suffered. But since the song itself was praised, it was relocated to the *konferans*. (Short films like *Tonya* are usually paired together and premised by so-called *konferans*i, i.e. slogans that move against a musical backdrop. In this case they move against the backdrop of two verses from the song.) Room has personally taken the completed film to Moscow to show to the administration [of the Committee on Cinema Affairs].¹²⁸

Besides the opening title sequence, the song is heard (without words) in the episode showing Tonya working in the office and in the death scene. Its most prominent features are the descending interval of the minor third and its inverse mirror image: the ascending interval of the major sixth: chromatic inflections of the pitches that fill in these intervals suggest, in tandem with changes in timbre and rhythm, the heroine's fleeting feelings of despair, anxiety, and defiance.¹²⁹

From their written remarks, it becomes clear that Prokofiev and Room intended the song to occupy an alternate time and space continuum than the rest of the soundtrack, which has an essentially illustrative character.¹³⁰ The number would fade in during a scene of humdrum activity, achieve full volume when the Germans are routed by the Red Army (in a fast-forward episode called "Vasya finishes off the enemy"), and fade out as the Soviet flag is slowly hoisted over the town. The text, written for Prokofiev by Mira, is found in the short score but not the orchestral score. The third strophe, from number 15 in the short score, captures the general sentiment:

At the hour of mortal battle the motherland summons
 Her loyal son to provide a blood oath
 To destroy the black regiments
 And lead the Motherland like Suvorov!



Klichet Rodina v chas smertnoy bitvi
 Klyatvu krovnuyu ey verniy sin' dayot
 Budut chornīye polki razbiti
 Po Suvorovski za Rodinu vperyod!¹³¹

This unambiguous exhortation is matched to a stripped-down accompaniment: sustained root position and first inversion D-major tonic chords passing to other chords built on the mediant, submediant, dominant, and subdominant. The texture expands through added thirds in the orchestral accompaniment and leaps of a fourth and sixth in the vocal line. Prokofiev assigns the third strophe a march-like tempo, with two cornets and a euphonium enhancing the armed services sound.

Overall, the song creates a peculiar impression. The music is unprepossessing, as though encoding within itself the comparative innocence of the newlywed nineteen-year-old heroine, but it is cast as a dirge with aspirations toward epic grandeur. Although linked with Tonya's sacrifice, the melody sounds outside the visual frame to take on a general meaning about masculine, rather than feminine, duty to the cause. The looped melody affronts the fast-pace visual action, suggesting the cessation of time associated with static camera shots. Reverberating throughout the soundtrack, the song takes on the guise of an air-raid siren, a repeated broadcast. Prokofiev wrote the music, of course, but it sounds like a poor copy of him. It suggests a composer seeking to limit his range of effects, to become, as it were, impersonal.

Why, then, was *Tonya* filmed but not released? There is no single explanation: ideological deficiencies, reduced distribution budgets and, as so often the case with Prokofiev, unhappy timing all contributed to the film not glowing on Soviet screens. In terms of its ideological deficiencies, one notes that the heroine dies at the hands of the bumbling, screwball Germans: hers is a passive end. Had the Red Army accidentally detonated Tonya, the film would have accorded with the definition of an "optimistic" tragedy, a prime tenet of Socialist Realism.

The music of *Tonya* was completed almost three months before the scenario was taken up by the Committee on Cinema Affairs. The bureaucratic delay irked Prokofiev: it was only after his intervention that the scenario was in fact adjudicated. On November 21 he petitioned Mikhail Tikhonov, the head of Mosfilm, for information about

the fate of the picture *Tonya*, for which I have written the music. If deemed viable, then all for the better. If, however, it definitely won't see light of day, be kind enough to let me know, so that I can weigh my options.¹³²

Prokofiev did not hear back from the studio about *Tonya* and did not refer to it again in his correspondence. By the end of November the film had for all intents and purposes been shelved; it remains unclear if Prokofiev received the 6,000-ruble payment stipulated in his contract for the score.¹³³ Although short wartime films, most often distributed in collections called "Battle Film Albums" (Boyeviye kinosborniki), served a useful purpose for the Stalinist regime, their production was curtailed in the fall of 1942, the low point of the Soviet war effort.¹³⁴ *Tonya* became the first half of an album titled *Our Girls* (*Nashi devushki*). The second half was the peculiar twenty-two-minute film *Once at Night* (*Odnazhdi noch'yu*), directed by Grigoriy Kozintsev. It concerns a female collective farmer who must decide which of the two Russian-speaking airmen who ask her for protection is a Nazi spy; her overriding concern, however, is her ailing sow Masha. This film, more so than *Tonya*, came in for criticism from the censors, who branded it "pathological"; Denise Youngblood, the source of this information, speculates that if *Tonya* had not been bundled together with *Once at Night*, it might well have been released.¹³⁵

Antokolsky

The prohibition of *Tonya* was a comparatively minor disappointment for Prokofiev, whose wartime labors raised his stature within the Soviet musical world, allowing him to dictate both the volume and content of his commissions. His finances, if not his material circumstances, greatly improved in 1942, and he began to reach out in earnest to those of his friends who had suffered personal losses or found themselves without a source of income. Prokofiev showed, for example, extreme concern for the welfare of the

widow of Demchinsky, who informed him, to his horror, that his close friend had died of hunger on February 16, 1942, the ghastly nadir of the Siege of Leningrad. On September 14, the grief-stricken, traumatized Varvara Demchinskaya wrote a tender letter to Prokofiev reminding him of the profound affection that Demchinsky had felt for him throughout his life. Her loss was his loss. “You were a part of Borik,” the widow offered. “How he loved your family; with what love he spoke about your sons. Where are they now? If he knew my lot, even his philosophical peace of mind, which withstood an agonizing death, would be shaken. Don’t ask me about his death. Sometime, if I see you, I’ll tell you about it myself.”¹³⁶ Prokofiev maintained an empathetic correspondence with the widow until 1947, much of it centering on her unsuccessful effort to turn the scenario of “The Craftsmen of Palekh” (Palekhovskiye kustari), one of Demchinsky’s literary projects, into a film.

The composer likewise supported the widow of his longtime assistant Derzhanovsky, who died unexpectedly in Zagorsk on September 19, 1942. Myaskovsky broke the news to him. In a belated letter of condolence to Yekaterina Derzhanovskaya, Prokofiev deemed it “very shameful” that the Union of Soviet Composers “did not arrange an evening in V[ladimir] V[ladimirovich]’s memory, but don’t grieve this... V. V. played a unique role in literary, musical, and concert life. But the perspective is still too close and people fail to see V. V.’s true significance. They will come back to his name, and this is much more important than any memorial concert.”¹³⁷ As with Demchinskaya, Prokofiev kept in contact with Derzhanovskaya until 1947, often sending her money.

In this last letter, Prokofiev updates Derzhanovskaya on his musical activities, specifically mentioning his *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*, which he composed in piano score between August 12 and October 15, 1942, in Alma-Ata. Prokofiev prearranged the 12,000-ruble commission for this work—a cantata scored for soprano and tenor soloists, chorus, and orchestra—with the Committee on Arts Affairs.¹³⁸ Shlifshteyn, the work’s dedicatee, facilitated the commission. Although Prokofiev did not finish the orchestration until the summer of 1943, *Ballad of an Unknown Boy* seems to have been conceived in honor of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution. In a March 8, 1942, letter sent from Tbilisi to Atovmyan in Moscow, Prokofiev addressed the circumstances of its conception while also prearranging an additional commission with Muzfond:

Shlifshteyn said that the Committee on Arts Affairs will commission either a symphonic work or a cantata for the 25th anniversary of October. Independent of this I have begun several things—an 8th Sonata, a suite from *Semyon Kotko*, and a suite from *War and Peace*. I would be grateful if you gave me a commission for one or two of the aforementioned works.¹³⁹

When he finished the piano score, he sent a letter to Shlifshteyn worriedly seeking confirmation that the first installment of his honorarium for *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*, 4,200 rubles, had been given to Lina. He expressed confidence that the cantata, a “very energetic and dramatic work,” would “affect the listener,” but he nonetheless decided to postpone orchestrating it in favor of more important tasks: writing the overture to *War and Peace* and orchestrating its last two scenes. “Let the cantata mature,” he told Shlifshteyn, “and it will be clearer to me how to orchestrate it.”¹⁴⁰ The manuscript of the piano score includes, on the back of the first page, a list of the percussion instruments that he intended to use in the cantata; the actual orchestration did not begin until June 25, 1943, in Novosibirsk. It was finished on July 28 in the Ural Mountains city of Molotov (henceforth Perm). Prokofiev turned the cantata over to a short-term assistant, the Kirov Theater concertmaster Mikhaïl Karpov, for copying, and then, on August 17, dispatched a letter to Khrapchenko requesting a November or December premiere.¹⁴¹

Ballad of an Unknown Boy is based on an eponymous text by Pavel Antokolsky, a prolific poet who joined the Communist Party on the eve of the German invasion, and who, in the first year of the Soviet struggle, compiled a patriotic, mixed-genre collection entitled *Iron and Fire (Zhelezo i ogon'*, 1942). The publication of “Ballad of an Unknown Boy” in the January 26, 1942, issue of *Literatura i iskusstvo* (Literature and Art) preceded the death of Antokolsky's son, an anti-tank gunner, at the front after less than a month of service.¹⁴² Prokofiev read the poem in Tbilisi, thereafter describing it to Sovinformbyuro as an

anxious story about a boy whose mother and sister were killed by fascists, eradicating his happy childhood. The shock to his spirit matures him, and readiness for action ripens within him. During the German retreat from his hometown, the boy detonates a car containing fascist commanding

officers with a grenade. The boy's name and fate remain unknown, but word of his brave deed spreads from the rear to the front and beckons forward.¹⁴³

Even in this official context, Prokofiev unmasks the ideological underpinnings of the poem: the boy does not have a father, thus his initiation into the struggle occurs without a mentor. Nature offers the substitute, “just like in a fairy tale,” Antokolsky writes in the third stanza, “autumn walked alongside him in order to cover his tracks.” In the sixth stanza, the imagery is inverted: the tale of the boy's deed spreads through the ranks, itself becoming a fairy tale. Time, moreover, is made circular: the heroic legend that the boy creates hastens him forward; he fashions and fulfills his own historic calling.

The cantata arguably captures this sentiment, but Prokofiev sensed that it would be panned by the Committee on Arts Affairs, commenting, in the aforementioned letter to Derzhanovskaya, that nobody “will make head or tail out of it without my involvement; last January [1943], Shlifshteyn didn't understand a thing and NYaM [Myaskovsky] only politely mumbled through his moustache.” These points pertain to the piano score only. The completed work did not receive a premiere until February 21, 1944; Gauk conducted it at the Moscow Conservatory, although Prokofiev's preferred choice had been the more exciting and exacting conductor Yevgeniy Mravinsky. Myaskovsky, who worried that the cantata “wouldn't take,” owing to the “very idiosyncratic interpretation by the performers,” called the premiere a “success, but not a clear one.”¹⁴⁴ He made his comments in private. In public, Shostakovich called Prokofiev's creative method into question, deriding the emphasis in the cantata on “accurate musical illustration of the text” at the expense of the “integrity of the musical form.” For Shostakovich, the cantata offered a cinematic impression: it comprised “a series of unrelated musical ‘stills.’”¹⁴⁵

The cantata's music is nondevelopmental, but it does cohere, and it offers a powerful propagandistic statement about the surface anxieties of the war and the higher truths that will vanquish them. The opening measures, depicting the German invasion of the Soviet town of “B,” are dominated—both in the hobbled, labored accompaniment and the disjointed, discordant vocal patterns—by the intervals of the minor second and major seventh. The march is hazily cast in A minor, with the tonic pedal pitch briefly embellished with a rising whole-tone scale in sixteenth notes—a glint of sorcery. With the exception of two minuscule alterations, Prokofiev set Antokolsky's text intact, generating awkward melodic lines from the awkward word choices:

“Mannequin behind mannequin,” the Germans travel “bulkily along the dirt.”¹⁴⁶ The introduction of the boy's theme, a simple cadential gesture sung by solo soprano, marks the beginning of extended crossover in the score from nonfunctional (A-minor) to functional (A-major) harmonic writing.

Prokofiev does not explicitly represent the positive hero: for obvious programmatic reasons, this character exists in the cantata more as an invisible concept than a tangible object. His part is not sung but embodied in the orchestra's primal forces. Rehearsal number 20 introduces a persistent three-pitch ostinato pattern that denotes the boy's pursuit of the Germans, and rehearsal number 29 inaugurates an exceedingly graphic orchestral representation of the horrors of the occupation of his hometown. The grenade throw is marked at rehearsal number 48 with a blast of white (key) light: a C-major chord, spread over six octaves. Prokofiev thereafter begins to smooth out the disjointed, discordant vocal patterns; he also harmonizes the hobbled, labored march of the opening measures, reprising it at rehearsal number 49 as part of a sensational cadential progression in C major, one that harmonizes the tonic (C) and subdominant (F) pitches along with their chromatic substitutes: C sharp and F sharp. The apotheosis, occupying rehearsal numbers 58–60, features a comparable progression that facilitates a modulation from C major to A major. Within Prokofiev's expanded conception of tonality, this progression is functional. Those nondiatonic pitches that customarily facilitate modulations—the lowered second scale degree, the raised fourth scale degree, and the lowered sixth scale degree—become part of the governing pitch collection. A major, in short, is enriched to include B flat, D sharp, and F natural.

Ballad of an Unknown Boy depicts a passage from darkness into radiance and chronological time into mythological time. Prokofiev does not purge the score of dissonance; rather, he renders the dissonance consonant. Evil becomes a fleeting, transient phenomenon. In the world of his music, as in the world of his faith, the higher, nobler instincts of humankind triumph over the lower, baser ones. The greater purpose cannot be dissipated.

Committee on Arts Affairs Evaluation

Ballad of an Unknown Boy was the last work completed in full by Prokofiev during his evacuation. Along with labor on this score and the cluster of film projects, Prokofiev began to revise *War and Peace* based on the evaluation of the piano score he received from the Committee on Arts Affairs. The detailed

May 10, 1942, assessment, compiled by Shlifshteyn and prefaced by a June 19 letter from Khrapchenko, reached him in Alma-Ata on July 6. Prokofiev finished the bulk of the requested revisions between August and October, updating Shlifshteyn of his progress each week by letter or telegraph.

Khrapchenko's letter, thin in concrete detail but thick in political import, established the groundwork for Shlifshteyn's recommendations for tilting the drama away from the quadrangular peacetime relationships between Natasha, Andrey, Anatol, and Pierre toward the broader wartime struggle between Russia (Kutuzov) and France (Napoleon). Khrapchenko argued that

From our point of view (I'm speaking of my opinion and those of a group of my comrades, constituted from a joint hearing and assessment), you no doubt succeeded with the lyrical scenes of the opera. The story of the relationship between Andrey Bolkonsky and Natasha is expressed in music of profound artistic conviction. There are many wonderful passages, enthralling in their warmth and musical expressiveness. The lyrical pages of the opera offer rich material for performers, who will be able to "sing to their hearts' content."

However, the second part of the opera, dedicated to the events of the Patriotic War of 1812, caused us serious doubts.

The people's scenes in an opera about the Patriotic War cannot help but occupy a significant and, one could say, predominant place. It stands to reason that the issue is not one of quantitative correlation. The fundamental tone of the work is what matters. The people's scenes should be a distinct leitmotif, bringing all of the visual action to a climax. Unfortunately, this does not occur in the opera. The individual people's scenes in the opera are not, first and foremost, organically integrated with the overall progress of the action. They exist in and of themselves, in isolation.¹⁴⁷

Shlifshteyn developed and embellished these brief points as follows:

I will begin with the music, depicting the internal world of the characters. Everyone liked this part of the opera and it

can be said that it received unanimous approval. Your lyrical side has at last been recognized. For my part I will note that you succeeded wonderfully with Natasha and Bolkon-sky (Pierre to a significantly lesser extent). All of Natasha's and Andrey's music in the 1st scene is true poetry. Natasha's arioso in the 2nd scene is outstanding in its beauty and vocal breadth; the entire 3rd scene (Bezukhov's ball) is exceptionally poetic; and Natasha's arietta is marvelously touching. Then the following waltz and the episode of Anatol's declaration to Natasha—again, pure poetry, no matter what kind. Everyone I showed it to was ecstatic. Whoever the future soprano turns out to be, [Natalya] Shpiller or [Yelena] Kruglikova, she will thank you for Natasha. And you don't often hear that coming from vocalists. The 5th scene (the "explanation" between Pierre and Natasha) leaves a very good impression. The characters' personalities are represented expressively, particularly [the troika driver] Balaga in the 4th scene.

The essential inadequacy of this scene (also the 2nd and 6th scenes) *is the abundance of conversation.* The episode about the defrocked priest [presumably the character who will marry the bigamist Anatol and Natasha across the border] held little musical interest for me and no dramatic importance. The conversation beginning with the words "Where's Khvostikov?" to the end of the scene seemed completely unnecessary.¹⁴⁸

There follow some quibbles about specific lines of text, including the wrong-headed assertion that the "cries of the delirious Andrey of 'piti, piti' and 'ti ti'" in scene 9 would occasion laughter, and thus needed to be "replaced or removed." Prokofiev left the episode intact, embellishing Andrey's extravagant recitation of the uninterruptible and uninterpretable "pi" and "ti" syllables with an offstage chorus of altos that expresses, on the one hand, his disorientation and, on the other, his crossover into another world; the task of the chanting, accordingly, is to articulate the transition from a physical to a metaphysical condition, feverishness to pellucidness. The pseudo-conscious admixture of musical and verbal utterances articulates something akin to the experience of a severe migraine (such as the composer himself suffered) or, as

Taruskin proposes with reference to Tolstoy's novel, the hissing, ticking, and whining noises associated with tinnitus.¹⁴⁹ Gradually, Andrey experiences heightened consciousness, much as his nation does. Over time, Prokofiev would enhance the impact of the scene by adding five more measures for the offstage chorus and a reprise of the waltz that occasioned Andrey's amorous first meeting with Natasha.¹⁵⁰ Andrey recalls these and other sounds from his past life, but he cannot pull them into the present and define them. The scene becomes an echo chamber.

Shlifshteyn's remaining comments emphasize the need to enhance the patriotic and populist appeal of the opera. Scenes 7 and 10 seemed, in his opinion, most in need of enrichment along these lines:

Now to the part of the opera that is inseparably tied to the subject of the Patriotic War of 1812, a subject that, *as Mikhail Borisovich Khrapchenko rightly indicates, should govern the performance*. There's a lot of good music in scene 7. The very beginning of the scene (B-flat minor), representing Borodino Field, creates a strong, impressive image. The entire episode of the approach of the Russian troops leaves a strong impression. The outstanding music for Kutuzov, the chorus of the popular guard, the Cossack song—all of this radiates power and authentic Russianness.

The inadequacy of the 7th scene is the presence (chiefly in the first half) *of a large number of conversational episodes*. For me Pierre and Fyodor's conversation about death (the purpose and general dramatic conception of this episode is not clear), Andrey's question about the Masonic fraternity, and [Lieutenant] Dolokhov's dialogue with Kutuzov were uninteresting and unnecessary.

The nature of the representation of the common people raises serious objections (this again concerns the first half of the 7th scene). All of those "ish', tī," "ekh, vazhno," "dyaden'ka," "tyaten'ka," "mus'yev," "khfedor" and the like could possibly, albeit in a very small dose, serve as local color adornments of the musical depiction of the people, but by no means as its essential features. Moreover, in the entire first half of the 7th scene, with the exception of the B-flat minor chorus of the popular guard, the people appear

in the guise of some folkish “khfedor” [Fyodor], oh so kind and simple-hearted. *Where are the wonderful people Kutuzov speaks about* (“A wonderful people; the beast will be wounded by the whole mighty force of Russia”), and where is the power of the people in the music?...

The same thing in the 10th scene. Instead of the naive “wrap-up” (the entire episode with Pierre), *here it is desirable to have music of broad, mighty breadth, actual folk music* such as you have in your *Alexander Nevsky*. *The victorious people and their exultation need to be shown.* [The leader of the popular guard] Denisov, [the villager] Vasilisa, and Kutuzov must be presented to the listener in their full stature. Your Vasilisa is no more than a generic figure, but *you need to show this Russian woman's heroic character, so that associations arise within the listener between her and other revered, regular people, present-day avengers: Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, Liza Chaykina, and others.* Likewise, the listener should discern in your Denisov the many heroes of the Patriotic War against Hitlerism, which will enter into the history of our people as their supreme patriotic and valiant struggle in their pursuit of happiness. The entire intimate world of this scene should cede to the expression of the people's essential nature.¹⁵¹

The key for Khrapchenko and Shlifshteyn was not to soften the image of the Russian people and to have their climactic choruses express partisan steadfastness, demonstrating that only a beast can wound a beast, only a thug can catch a thug. Prokofiev's real-life models were to be the young female guerilla fighters Kosmodemyanskaya and Chaykina, hardened saboteurs who succeeded (before being captured and suffering hideous deaths) in destroying German weaponry and communications.

Mira fretted about the potentially debilitating workload occasioned by the requests for revisions, recalling Prokofiev mockingly muttering to himself at his desk: “Write, write, write write... write write write write.”¹⁵² On August 10, 1942, he hurriedly informed Khrapchenko that he had “finished the revision of the seventh scene; I'm now working on the scene of Moscow [afame].”¹⁵³ On November 16, he submitted that he had completed the last item on his list of changes: establishing the importance of the Russian people

to the action in a heroic choral epigraph.¹⁵⁴ Having consciously reconfigured *War and Peace* along Musorgskian lines (the rewritten “Moscow Aflame” scene absorbed features of the “Kromi Forest” episode in Musorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*), Prokofiev arranged to leave for Moscow on December 15 to participate in its second adjudication, a prearranged, closed-door affair before what would prove to be a skeptical crowd.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the best that Prokofiev would be able to claim for *War and Peace* by the end of the year was the forthcoming publication, on Atovmyan’s initiative, of ten arias and choruses in collotype—hardly the resplendent unveiling the opera deserved.¹⁵⁶ To his dismay, he was asked to rename it *Natasha Rostova* in recognition of the fact that it lacked the scope of Tolstoy’s novel. This he adamantly refused to do, since the bulk of his revisions had involved enhancing its historical grandeur.

Abbreviated Homecoming

In Moscow, Prokofiev stayed at the National Hotel; despite returning home, he remained an evacuee. The widow of Zinoviy Feldman (the composer who had scored Prokofiev’s 1939 music for the physical culture spectacle) invited him to a subdued New Year’s Eve gathering in her apartment. There he reunited with Atovmyan, who had spent part of 1942 shuttling between evacuation points as part of his duties for the Union of Soviet Composers, and with some of the artists (including Myaskovsky) with whom Prokofiev had stayed in Nalchik and Tbilisi. The actress Valeriya Massalitinova commented that Prokofiev looked thin but otherwise well.

Moscow existed in a state of siege, with returning citizens subject to interrogation at perimeter checkpoints and blackout regulations requiring the blanketing of windows at night. Amid extreme shortages of provisions and sporadic services, cultural life endured, becoming more rather than less relevant as the war raged. Prokofiev devoted the bulk of his time promoting *War and Peace* (on January 16, 1943, he performed excerpts from the score to those members of the Bolshoy Theater collective who had returned to the capital); he also advised Richter on the preparation of the Seventh Sonata for the January 18 premiere. (Richter recalled that the meeting was businesslike, save for the trifling fact that the two of them bumped heads while trying to repair a pedal on the piano; he also claimed, at odds with the chronology, that he learned the Seventh Sonata in a few days.)¹⁵⁷ Before Prokofiev’s return to Alma-Ata, the musicologist David Rabinovich, who

attended the Bolshoy Theater run-through of *War and Peace*, suggested that he undertake a revision of *Semyon Kotko*, which he felt had increased in topical relevance since the time of its removal from the Stanislavsky Theater repertoire. Rabinovich recommended “replacing the prologue and parts of the fourth and fifth acts,” so that the opera ended “on a tragic plane, with the murder of Sofya, for example.”¹⁵⁸ Absorbed elsewhere, Prokofiev dismissed the advice.

Prokofiev arranged to leave Moscow for Alma-Ata on January 23, but ending up delaying the departure until the start of February. Upon arriving in the Kazakh capital on February 13, he resumed work on the Ivan the Terrible project and *War and Peace*, taking into account both Eisenstein's recommendations for further thematic changes to the opera and those of the Bolshoy Theater conductor Samuil Samosud, who became a prominent, if inconsistent, advocate of the opera in the years ahead. During the spring, the editing of *Lermontov* at long last came to an end, the result being a beautiful cinematic patchwork. Prokofiev and Mira saw the film for the first time on July 28, the month of its general release. As testament to the vagaries of their existence, they saw it neither in Moscow nor in Alma-Ata but in Perm, where Prokofiev had been summoned to recommence work on an oft-postponed project: the ballet *Cinderella*.

He learned about the release of *Lermontov* from the local Perm newspapers, and he had no idea how the protracted dispute about the soundtrack had been resolved. Upon seeing the film, Prokofiev discovered that, of the pieces that he had provided for it, the polonaise, the contradanse, the “Mephisto” Waltz, and the second “Youth” Waltz had all survived the final edit.¹⁵⁹ Pushkov, the other composer participating in the project, supplied background music for the two duel scenes, a folksong for the central episode in the Caucasus, and an additional waltz. Prokofiev deemed the additions adequate, but blanched at the “mixture of his music with that of another composer.”¹⁶⁰

Released two years after the centenary of the title character's death, *Lermontov* received scant attention in the press, but great attention in official circles. The film was condemned, the result being Gendelshteyn's banishment from the elite studios; he spent the rest of his career making documentaries. A Sovnarkom document dated July 21, 1943, summarizes the reaction: “At the conference of film dramatists this film was harshly criticized, with the leading directors voicing regret that its creators ‘rendered’ the subject matter ‘obscene.’ It is no wonder that Soviet viewers have not accepted this film and

have not gone to see it.”¹⁶¹ Of necessity, those who reviewed *Lermontov* in the press followed the official line. The most incisive of these reviews came from Viktor Shklovsky, who wrote at length on cinema in addition to his vaunted literary criticism. In a July 25, 1943, review in the newspaper *Trud* (Labor), Shklovsky labeled *Lermontov* “philosophically deficient” owing to its failure to provide the kind of “historically authentic” image of the poet that the Soviet populace “needed.”¹⁶²

Despite the prominence of the soundtrack, Shklovsky does not address it, though the cognitive dissonance that stems from the conflation of Prokofiev’s neoclassical dances and Pushkov’s neo-romantic dirges would seem to be prime interpretive fodder for a theorist of his stature. The score of *Lermontov* is nothing if not an example of unusual stylistic contrasts. On their own, Prokofiev’s dances establish the film’s central themes: Lermontov’s extreme isolation from Russian aristocratic life and the aristocracy’s coarse disregard for his talent. The polonaise, a musical emblem of triumphant tsarist militarism, opens and closes the scene in which Lermontov hears the awful news of Pushkin’s death.¹⁶³ He alone is affected: the ladies and gentlemen of the court continue their indifferent whirl. The “Mephisto” Waltz dominates the second ball scene, in which Lermontov is pulled away from settling an argument with a diplomat, an unhappy portent. The scene is constructed in such a fashion as to signal Lermontov’s forthcoming rendezvous with fate. Of the revelers, he is the only one without a mask; the poet is exposed, susceptible, it would appear, to the workings of Machiavellian—or “Mephistophelean”—forces. The frantic pace of the framing sections of the waltz and the chromatic descents assigned to the solo violin in the middle section enhance the tension of the scene.

But it is the indifferent whirl that beguiles. It suggests more about Prokofiev’s creative approach and outlook than the astonishing propagandistic particulars of *Kotovskiy*, *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*, and *Tonya*. Prokofiev moved from place to place, project to project in 1942 and 1943, but rather than hampering his creativity, the disruptions appeared to drive it. In Atovmyan’s words, “Prokofiev worked at the time with, I would say, rabid passion.”¹⁶⁴ As part of his internal time-saving mechanism, he did not allow himself to dwell on the blind spots in his personal affairs. Work was his obligation, and he honored it with something akin to the Christian Science tenet that “constant toil, deprivations, exposures, and all untoward conditions, *if without sin*, can be experienced without suffering.”¹⁶⁵ But suffering aside, Prokofiev was reaching the limit of his endurance.

Lina and Mira

Prokofiev lived in Perm from late June to early October, after which he returned to Moscow, in the same hyper-energetic frame of mind, to begin to reassemble his previous existence. Excluding his January visit, Prokofiev was one of the last of the evacuated composers to make it back to the capital.¹⁶⁶ Atovmyan, who seems to have expected Prokofiev to return much earlier, greeted him at the train station on October 5.¹⁶⁷ The government, which had itself relocated during the worst phase of the Great Patriotic War, advertised the cultural revival of Moscow to the world as a sign that the defeat of Hitler was imminent.¹⁶⁸ By the end of 1943, the upper hand in the conflict had moved for good to the side of the Soviets, with the Red Army repelling the Wehrmacht kilometer by kilometer along the entire stretch of the eastern front. The staggering failure to conquer Stalingrad (now Volgograd) and the horrendous human losses incurred in the effort to retain control of Kursk broke the back of the German campaign.

Prokofiev's return to Moscow was not self-willed: in Perm on October 2, 1943, he received a telegram from Vladimir Surin, deputy chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs, summoning him to the capital to participate in the all-important competition for a new Soviet anthem, one that would replace the antiquated "Internationale," which had been in use since the Revolution.¹⁶⁹ (Surin, whose position on the Committee exceeded that of Shlifshteyn, signed off on the commission for *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*.) The authors of the text of the anthem, Sergey Mikhalkov and Gabriel El-Registan, believed that the task of writing the music should be assigned either to Shostakovich or Prokofiev, the best composers in the nation. To this end they wrote a letter to Marshall Kliment Voroshilov, the chairman of the Anthem Commission. Voroshilov dismissed the petition, resolving that, although "Shostakovich and Prokofiev are truly the most renowned composers of our day," the competition would involve "all of the composers of the USSR (perhaps even non-composers will participate), and the one who provides the best music for the anthem will be the author of this historic work."¹⁷⁰ In the end, some two hundred composers participated in the competition, and Prokofiev, like his colleagues, found his work intensely scrutinized. He introduced the first draft on October 10 to Shlifshteyn and Rabinovich, who "seemed to like it."¹⁷¹ Khrapchenko, however, asked that the music be simplified and written with "greater sincerity." The next evening, Prokofiev wrote a new version, which both Surin and Khrapchenko approved. His entry did not,

however, make it to the final and third round of the competition at the Bolshoy Theater (the entries were performed by the Red Army Chorus before Stalin), and he knew, by October 13, that the entries of Shostakovich and Yuriy Shaporin were considered more successful.¹⁷² In the end, and after considerable infighting, the award went to Aleksandr Aleksandrov for his adaptation of a preexisting Bolshevik song to Mikhalkov and El-Registan's text. In 1945, Prokofiev would participate—as he had to—in a similar competition for an anthem for the RSFSR, though the outcome, despite two rewrites, would be the same.¹⁷³

His involvement in the competition took a novel twist in December, when he enlisted the orchestrator Dmitriy Rogal-Levitsky to assist with the reconstitution of the orchestration of his ballet *The Tale of the Buffoon*, which the Kirov Theater had offered to produce before even becoming familiar with the music.¹⁷⁴ The offer, which Prokofiev received back in Perm, amounted to a bribe: hoping to steal the seemingly imminent premiere of *War and Peace* away from the Bolshoy Theater, the Kirov offered to resurrect a forgotten work from his Parisian youth. Prokofiev, however, did not have a copy of the then-unpublished orchestral score with him. “The sole orchestral manuscript, my original, was destroyed in Berlin during the bombings,” he speculated. “On my instruction they searched for it there but did not find it. I assume, though I can't be sure, that it burned up.”¹⁷⁵ Rogal-Levitsky hesitantly accepted the challenge of reconstituting the score based on the orchestral suite and the piano score, which Prokofiev managed to locate. The two of them met punctually—work time, Prokofiev insisted, must not be wasted—to discuss the project until March 16, 1944, at which point Rogal-Levitsky received notice that he had been appointed, by none other than Stalin, to undertake a new orchestration of Aleksandrov's prize-winning anthem since Stalin disliked the original one. Hearing the news, Prokofiev joked: “Now I have nothing to fear and can entirely relax about *The Buffoon*, since it is in sure hands, the hands of the ‘State orchestrator.’”¹⁷⁶ Meantime, the Kirov Theater had quietly dropped its offer to perform the ballet. Rogal-Levitsky, who had been working on the orchestration without payment or even a contract, received Prokofiev's blessing to move on to other things.

Prokofiev did not have a permanent home in Moscow during this period, which forced him to reenact the hotel-based existence he had had in the Caucasus, Alma-Ata, and Perm. From October 1943 to January 1944, he and Mira lived in a single room with a piano in the Hotel Moscow (Moskva), an imposing concrete fortress located adjacent to Red Square (it was

constructed in 1935, demolished in 2004, and recently reconstructed atop an underground parking garage). In February, according to Rogal-Levitsky, Prokofiev relocated to the Metropole Hotel and after that to the Savoy, his accommodations in this last hotel being much more modest than in the previous two.

Irrespective of events in his own unsettled life, Prokofiev remained extremely concerned about the well-being of his family, especially after he learned, on May 19, 1943, in Alma-Ata, that Oleg had contracted diphtheria.¹⁷⁷ In response, he immediately transferred the funds needed for his hospitalization to Lina. On June 5, she informed him by telegraph that Oleg's condition had improved, though he remained under observation for abnormal heart rhythms. July 24 brought the distressing news from Svyatoslav that Lina had contracted the same illness. On this occasion, Prokofiev asked Atovmyan to provide the needed funds for the treatment. Svyatoslav contracted tuberculosis in the autumn, and the family's health and general nutrition (their access to restricted meal halls) remained a pressing concern. He appealed to Khrapchenko, Sovnarkom, and the Union of Soviet Composers for assistance. On June 4, Khachaturyan, the deputy chairman of the Orgkomitet (Organizing Committee) of the Union and a Prokofiev ally, pledged to ensure that his family had adequate support.

According to a July 19, 1968, interview of Lina by Malcolm Brown, Prokofiev began to visit his wife and children following his return to Moscow in October 1943. "He was pleased," Lina commented, that "I had kept his suits and not exchanged them for sugar, lard, butter, or anything else." The conversation, she added, "tended to be strained and formal. He avoided mention of Mira."

The Eisenstein Films

Prokofiev and the eminent director Sergey Eisenstein collaborated on three films: *Alexander Nevsky*, Eisenstein's first sound film, and on Parts I and II of *Ivan the Terrible*, two-thirds of a proposed trilogy about the first Russian Grand Prince to become tsar, and his transformation of the nation into an autocratic state. Filmed and edited on an extremely tight schedule, *Alexander Nevsky* went into general release on December 1, 1938. Part I of *Ivan the Terrible*, which was filmed in Alma-Ata and edited in Moscow, received its premiere at the Bolshoy Theater on December 30, 1944. It received official approval for general release twenty-four hours later, opening at the Udarnik, Khudozhestvenniy, and Rodina theaters in Moscow on January 18, and another nine theaters on January 19, 1945. Part II was banned from general release by a March 5, 1946, Central Committee decree. Fragments survive of Part III.

Politics and serious health problems put unforeseen constraints on the collaboration. Had Eisenstein and Prokofiev been allowed to work together after 1946, their innovations in sound cinema might have progressed to the point where Eisenstein's montage theories might have found equivalents in Prokofiev's scores. Instead, the collaboration finds the two of them seeking, with limited technical resources, to forge an effective sound-sight dialogue. In *Alexander Nevsky*, this dialogue expresses a clear-cut political message; in *Ivan the Terrible*, it assumes a mystical, spiritual dimension.

This chapter traces the evolution of these films while also challenging some assumptions about the Prokofiev-Eisenstein partnership.

Alexander Nevsky

Alexander Nevsky was a means for Eisenstein to salvage his distinguished international career following the prohibition of *Bezhin Meadow* (*Bezhin lug*, 1937) in mid-production. That film, on which some two million rubles had been spent, recounts in apocryphal form the martyrdom of the Pioneer Pavel Morozov, who defends the local collective farm from crop saboteurs, only to be murdered by his deranged kulak father. Following its prohibition, the film was destroyed—only stills remain. Eisenstein was accused of ideological transgressions—reverting to abstract biblical and mythological imagery, focusing on the domestic side of the tragedy over the uplifting social side, engaging in unspecified formalist experiments—by the head of the State Cinema Directorate, Boris Shumyatsky, with whom he had a history of such disputes.

The scandal posed a grave threat to Eisenstein, but Shumyatsky ended up taking the fall: having overplayed his hand in cultural affairs, he would be arrested on January 8, 1938, and executed on July 29.¹ Eisenstein survived, but his career was almost ruined. On April 16, 1937, eight months before Shumyatsky's arrest, he submitted a letter to the bureaucrat admitting grave errors of judgment in *Bezhin Meadow*. He begged for a chance to make a film showing “the country, the people, the Party, the work of Lenin, October.”² He specifically asked to collaborate with the prose writer and dramatist Vsevolod Vishnevsky on *We, the Russian People* (*Mi—russkiy narod*). Shumyatsky reacted harshly to Eisenstein's request, forwarding it on April 19 to Stalin with a note recommending that Eisenstein remain permanently unemployed, irrespective of the fact that the director “in private conversations seeks to back his claims with threats of suicide.”³ To allow Eisenstein to rehabilitate himself, Shumyatsky contended, would be to undermine the March 5, 1937, Central Committee resolution prohibiting *Bezhin Meadow*. The Central Committee backed Shumyatsky, ruling on April 19 that Eisenstein could not return to work and ordering the newspapers to devote space to “the falsity of S. Eisenstein's creative method.”⁴

On May 15, Aleksey Angarov, a leading official in the Central Committee's Cultural Enlightenment Division, overruled Shumyatsky in a report submitted to Stalin and Andrey Andreyev, a Politburo member and the Central Committee Secretary in charge of culture and ideology. “Shumyatsky has the wrong viewpoint,” Angarov asserted, “because the director Eisenstein is for all of his formalist mistakes a talented artist and, if he is guided, can

make a good Soviet film.”⁵ Angarov stressed that Eisenstein would follow Vishnevsky’s advice if permitted to work with him. The director had earned a last-minute reprieve, and would henceforth appease. On May 9, 1937, the Central Committee instructed Shumyatsky to reenlist Eisenstein. He was to be given a proper subject on a preapproved scenario.⁶

In the end, Eisenstein did not film *We, the Russian People*, which concerned, in Vishnevsky’s words, “Russia in 1916–17 and 1918, October, the creation of the Red Army, and battles with German interventionists.”⁷ The subject matter was passé; the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution had all but exhausted the market for films about the Bolshevik triumph. *We, the Russian People* was assigned for revision to the director Efim Dzigan, with whom Vishnevsky had worked on the 1936 film *We Are from Kronstadt* (*Mi iz Kronshdada*). A creative dispute resulted in the project’s annulment. Eisenstein, meanwhile, expressed an interest in filming the twelfth-century epic *The Lay of the Host of Igor* (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*). The Mosfilm studios, heeding the thematic plan of the State Cinema Directorate, instead offered Eisenstein a choice of two newly completed scenarios. The first of these was Viktor Shklovsky’s *Minin and Pozharsky* (*Minin i Pozharskiy*), an allegorical tribute to the two figures credited with ending the Time of Troubles. According to historical legend, Kuzma Minin, a resident of Nizhniy Novgorod, and Dmitriy Pozharsky, a Rurikid prince, assembled the Russian army that expelled the Poles from the Moscow Kremlin. Eisenstein eventually adopted the second scenario, which concerned Alexander Nevsky, the Grand Prince of Novgorod and Vladimir who, for his defense of Russia, was sanctified by the Orthodox Church in 1547. This scenario was drafted by Pyotr Pavlenko, a prose writer, courtroom reporter, and wartime journalist who received four Stalin Prizes over the course of his prolific party-line career.

Originally titled *The Great Sovereign Novgorod* (*Gospodin Velikiy Novgorod*) and *Rus’*, the scenario served as a populist call to arms and national oneness in the face of impending Nazi aggression. Through allegorical extension, it also beatified Stalin.⁸ The sparseness of the late thirteenth-century/early fourteenth-century chronicle of Nevsky’s life provided Pavlenko and (later) Eisenstein with a comparatively free interpretive hand, the result being a film that, according to Russell Merritt, “mixes together different story formulae from different eras, much in the way Wagner fuses and alters elements from Teutonic and Old Norse mythology for his Ring Cycle.” The film, Merritt proposes, interlaces the source chronicle with elements of

medieval epic and chivalric romance, ultimately adapted to the political realities of the late 1930s.⁹ A July 12, 1938, article in *Izvestiya* titled “Alexander Nevsky and the Rout of the Germans” shows the seriousness of Eisenstein’s propagandistic intentions. The article avoids mentioning Nevsky’s sainthood, depicting him instead as the thirteenth-century equivalent of a stalwart Bolshevik folk hero. Eisenstein draws attention to the “colorful figure of the governor of Pskov, Tverdil[o] Ivankovich, who betrayed Pskov to the Germans out of selfish personal interests.”¹⁰ This character occupies the twin socialist realist roles of military-industrial saboteur and counterrevolutionary. Having fallen under the sway of foreign forces, he must be liquidated. Eisenstein concludes the article by paralleling Russia’s (reimagined) past and (hypothetical) future: “For, if the might of our national soul was able to punish the enemy in this way, when the country lay exhausted in the grip of the Tatar yoke, then nothing will be strong enough to destroy this country which has broken the last chains of its oppression; a country which has become a socialist motherland; a country which is being led to unprecedented victories by the greatest strategist in world history—Stalin.”¹¹

Pavlenko and Eisenstein published the scenario in the December 1937 issue of the journal *Znamya* (Banner) ahead of making the film. They received numerous solicited and unsolicited suggestions as to how the script might be brought (in the words of one critic) “closer to historical truth.”¹² They prudently heeded the most trenchant, high-level criticisms, with Eisenstein reporting on April 26, 1938, that “after a lot of work, conducted in collaboration with historians, the scenario of *Rus’* has met its end.... Its successor is the *Alexander Nevsky* scenario.”¹³ Eisenstein navigated carefully. Vishnevsky noted in his diary that the director was “anxious and worried” about the film, darkly adding that “either [he] will again return to the fore, or...”¹⁴

Apart from the elimination of a scene featuring a quarrel between residents on opposite sides of Novgorod—a scene that Eisenstein conceived as the historical antecedent to the post-Revolution civil war in Russia—the last scene underwent the biggest change. The first draft depicted Nevsky’s death following a diplomatic mission to the city of Sarai (assumed to have been situated on the lower Volga River) to meet with Sartaq Khan, the commander of the Golden Horde of the Mongol Empire. Knowing that he cannot dispatch the Mongols from Russia as easily as he had dispatched the Teutonic crusaders, Nevsky humbly submits to the Khan and pledges to help him defeat common enemies. The decadent, despotic Khan is served by a group of Russian traitors who, resenting and fearing Nevsky, poison him.

Nevsky tells the Khan that Russia's ancestral lands should be governed by Russians; the Khan replies that he alone will rule them. "I admire brave people," he ends the discussion, "return ye to your home!" Nevsky mounts his steed and heads northwest with his men through a ravaged landscape, pledging, as the toxin spreads through his blood, to defeat the Khan and restore his people's honor. He falls from his horse at Kulikovo Field (near the Don River), the future site of the defeat of the Mongols under the leadership of Prince Dmitriy Donskoy. Eisenstein intended to include an image of this victory in the film in the guise of a prophetic, end-of-life vision.¹⁵

In his memoirs, Eisenstein describes how the film's original ending was banned by one of his minders:

On the way back from the Horde the poisoned Prince, looking before him at a distant field—Kulikovo Field—died. Pavlenko and I had our holy warrior take a small detour for this purpose from the historic path along which [he] actually traveled, and so he did not reach his own home.

A hand other than mine drew a red line after the scene of the defeat of the German masses.

"The scenario ends here," I was told. "Such a good prince must not die!"¹⁶

The identity of the censor remains unknown. Subsequently, on May 7, 1938, Stalin reviewed a typescript of the rewritten scenario and remarked "It seems it turned out not badly" on the first page.¹⁷ The rewritten scenario culminates and concludes with the Battle on the Ice, a lament for the fallen Russian heroes, the ruthlessly efficient liquidation of woebegone, stupefied traitors, and a celebration, graced with touches of Gogolian folk humor, of the triumph in the central square of the newly liberated city of Pskov.

The conductor Frank Strobel, who reconstructed a hypothetical version of Prokofiev's *Alexander Nevsky* score for screenings involving live orchestra, believes that the loss of the original ending can be heard in the score. In a roundtable discussion following one of the screenings, Strobel remarked that the hymnlike music of the revised ending sounds hollow, owing to the silencing of the otherwise prominent chorus and the paucity of instruments playing in the middle register. "The film's finale lacks the sense of a powerful conclusion."¹⁸ The point was challenged by the Eisenstein archivist Naum Kleyman, who claimed that the music enters a celestial plane at the end, with

the thirteenth-century conflict between the Russians and Teutonic crusaders elevated, for powerful propagandistic purposes, into a conflict between the spiritual and the material. *Rus'* has the divine on its side:

There is no sense of a joyful “Gloria,” of a pompous musical eulogizing—those *tutti* trumpets and kettledrums that usually conclude this type of film. To be sure, the orchestra’s final sound is not “empty”: the celebration just isn’t “materialized”; it remains light and “transparent,” achieving, if you will, spiritual depth. It is like seeing the eternal, like floating in the cosmos, free from gravity’s pull.¹⁹

Prokofiev did not work with the original ending of the scenario, and the extent to which Eisenstein discussed it with him remains unclear. If, as Kleyman suggests, the ending of the score has a spiritual component, it reflects Nevsky’s penultimate declaration in the film—“Whoever comes to us with the sword shall perish by the sword”—a paraphrase from the New Testament Book of Matthew: “All who draw the sword will die by the sword” (26:52). The reference places Nevsky in the role of the Messiah.

Details about the actual filming of *Alexander Nevsky* in 1938 are scarce, owing to the loss of Mosfilm archival records during the war. The lucrative 25,000-ruble contract for the music provides something of a timeline: it specifies completion of the battle music by June 10, submission of the sketches for the Latin (Catholic) chant of the Teutonic crusaders by July 15, and completion of the entire score according to Eisenstein’s instructions by November 1. Payment was made in four 6,250-ruble installments, the last one contingent on the film’s approval for release.²⁰ Regular shooting began on June 5 on Lake Pleshcheyevo (Pereslavl-Zalesskiy), although as early as April test shots were taken of the actors and the artificial snow and ice that had been made in Potilikha, the Moscow suburb that housed the Mosfilm studios, for the Battle on the Ice. An April 21 bulletin in *Pravda* describes “preparations” for filming; a July 8 follow-up mentions the “350 people” involved in the battle scene.²¹ From mid-October to November 4, Eisenstein edited the footage. He had been given a firm deadline to complete the film by Semyon Dukelsky, the chairman of the Committee on Cinema Affairs. A first draft, including different versions of crucial scenes and the rough cut of the Battle on the Ice, was screened in the Kremlin in early October. Because Stalin approved it without demanding changes, Eisenstein lost the chance to

trim the redundant Battle on the Ice footage—he had planned to remove 200 meters—and to improve the woeful sound quality.²² For reasons that remain unclear, the “Fight on the Novgorod Bridge” (Draka na Novgorodskom moste) episode was cut from the film.²³

During the frantic editing phase, Eisenstein studied the footage of each scene of *Alexander Nevsky* in his studio and manually edited it frame by frame, combining and contrasting shots for the purpose of boosting dramatic tension. His editing process, which emphasized axial cuts, bore musical logic—Eisenstein focused on dynamic and rhythmic contrasts—and it facilitated the assemblage of a soundtrack that bore visual logic. Eisenstein claimed that when Prokofiev watched the edited footage, he would impatiently and spasmodically tap his fingers

as if receiving telegraph signals. Is Prokofiev beating time? No, he is “beating” something more complex. His moving fingers grasp the structural canons governing the lengths of time and tempo in the edited pieces, harmonizing these with the actions and intonations of the characters.²⁴

Prokofiev, Eisenstein continued, timed the edited scenes with a stopwatch, and composed music for them in haste: “At night we look through a new sequence of the film. By morning a new sequence of music will be ready for it.”²⁵ The cerebral concision of Prokofiev’s style, Eisenstein appended, recalled the French realist writer Stendhal.

The nature of the collaboration merits closer assessment, since Eisenstein later theorized that *Alexander Nevsky* marries sight and sound in a special way: the emphasis in the film on the common internal elements of the two media, he suggested, allows the audience to *hear* the visuals and see the *music*. Prokofiev described the collaboration in characteristically matter-of-fact terms. In a September 20, 1938, article in *Literaturnaya gazeta*, he reported that Eisenstein “placed a series of serious demands” on him before, during, and after the filming. Following protracted discussions with the director at the start of the summer, he produced the sketches for the score. These guided Eisenstein in the shooting of certain unspecified scenes. But in September, after Prokofiev returned to Moscow from a two-month stay in the Caucasus (resorts in Teberda and Kislovodsk), the situation reversed itself: “I became familiar with the filmed scenes and wrote the music for them.” The music, once the master of the visuals, became their servant.²⁶

A letter to Alpers reveals that Prokofiev visited the Mosfilm studios on several occasions. "Leaving my Cello Concerto unfinished," he wrote on July 13,

I threw myself into the composition of the music for *Alexander Nevsky*, which Eisenstein, doubtless our finest film director, is realizing with great pomp. Half of the film is taken up with the Battle on the Ice, which is being shot in the summer, the ice being made out of asphalt painted white, glass, and white sand (snow powder). I was at the filming several times; it's turning out great. Only the horses are behaving badly: the "ice" constantly needs to be cleaned.²⁷

His visits to the studio marked, at best, the midpoint of his work on the score. In a follow-up letter to Alpers from Moscow dated October 26, he laments having to postpone traveling to Leningrad to conduct because he was "up to [his] ears" in the film.²⁸

The memoirs of the innovative sound engineer Boris Volsky provide an entertaining anecdotal account of Prokofiev's adventures in the recording studio, including his experiments with microphone placement. The composer divided the unfinished orchestral score into equal halves, Russian and Teutonic, and worked with Volsky to ensure that the former sound sounded "pleasant" to the ear and the latter "unpleasant." The "grand" sound of the oboes eclipsed that of the "little" trumpets, and a Mosfilm office drawer augmented the percussion section.²⁹ The recording was made in three studios on just three microphones, and then transferred to film using the outmoded optical sound system invented in 1928 by Aleksandr Shorin and Pavel Tager. It is hiss-filled, distorted, and muffled (the orchestra, moreover, is out of tune). Although Eisenstein and Prokofiev doubtless intended to re-record it—even Lina complained about its woefulness—the rough cut, a product of on-the-spot contrivance and adjustment, went out as the final cut.³⁰

The source materials for the project include an annotated eighty-four-page "director's scenario," dated March 1938, an eighteen-page bundle of sketches and drafts that seem to have been collected from different phases of the project and assembled in a convenient order, and forty-four-page orchestral score that finds Prokofiev tinkering with the instrumentation after hearing how it sounded when recorded. The director's scenario is the most revealing of the three documents, since it predates the start of the shooting of the film by up to three

months, and shows the composer's intentions in embryonic form.³¹ The text was written by Eisenstein's assistant director Dmitriy Vasilyev and the cinematographer Eduard Tissé based on the original "literary scenario." It comprises a precise description of each planned shot sequence, including camera positions, the amount of film stock to be used (1 meter = 2 seconds of viewing), and dialogue. In consultation with Eisenstein, Prokofiev jotted down his thoughts on the style and amount of music to be used in certain scenes, and indicated which passages he intended to compose before the shooting and after.

The foreword to the document contains a pair of quotations from Marx—the first from chapter 5 of *La Russie et l'Europe (Revelations on the Diplomatic History of the Eighteenth Century)*, the second from the "Chronological Tables" included in the second edition of the collected works of Marx and Engels—which further attest to the transformation of *Alexander Nevsky* from a historical chronicle into a military-political manifesto as it made its way through the approval process. "In the 13th century," Vasilyev and Tissé write,

Russia was first subjected to aggression from Eastern and Western colonizers. German orders of Livonian and Teutonic knights intervened from the West. This was preceded by another intervention from the East—the Tatar invasion, which placed Russia under the yoke of the Golden Horde.

"This yoke both oppressed and affronted the spirit of those people who became its victims. The Mongol Tatars established a regime of systematic terror; destruction and mass murder became its permanent institutions." K. Marx.

"Despite this the Novgorod Prince Alexander Nevsky, having become the leader of a Russian popular defense, confronted the German knights, defeating them on the ice of Lake Peipus. The scoundrels were cast from Russia once and for all." K. Marx.

With this Alexander prepared the ground for the liberation of Rus' from the Mongols—who were routed after his death by his great-grandson Dmitriy Donskoy—and forged the path to the future united Russian State.³²

Taking this gloss on the facts as his prompt, Prokofiev confined his musical outline of *Alexander Nevsky* to seven, potentially eight, discrete sections:

"Rus' in Ruins," "Sunrise" (Prokofiev placed a question mark after this section), "Veche" (the medieval Russian term for a popular assembly, referring here to the Novgorod war council), "Mobilization," "Swine" (the Russian term for a "boar's head" cavalry wedge formation), "Russian *rozhki*," "*Sopeli*," and "*Kare*" (the Russian term for military camp, or "square," here referring to the gathering of Nevsky's forces at Lake Peipus).³³ The outline betrays an interest in historical precision that is absent from the finished score. Fixating on the references to period instruments in the scenario, Prokofiev planned on infusing his score with the sound of the thirteenth-century Novgorodian *rozhok*, a wooden pipe with a horn bellmouth, and *sopel*, a hybrid panpipe. Eisenstein shows these nasal-sounding instruments being blown upon in the film, but Prokofiev decided against including them in his score. He instead fantastically reimaged their sound on modern trumpets, trombones, flutes, oboes, bells, and tambourines. (On page 59 of the scenario, he indicates an intention to "test" the sound of these instruments at the microphone.)

For the "Rus' in ruins" section of the score, Prokofiev wanted the music to bear both a "Mongol nuance" and the echoes of ancient battles. The result was a three-note semitonal figure that sounds in the upper and lower registers of the string section three times, followed by a long-breathed oboe and clarinet melody accompanied by restless sixteenth- and thirty-second-note patterns. The music approximates the barrenness of Eisenstein's visuals, which suggest, on the one hand, the timeless grandeur of the Russian terrain and, on the other, the devastation that has been wrought upon it. For Prokofiev, this terrain obviously had points in common with another: the opening sonority of *Alexander Nevsky* is the same as the opening sonority of his music for Tairov's *Egyptian Nights*.

On pages 7–14 of Vasilyev and Tissé's scenario, Prokofiev offers some general remarks about the "pleasant" and "glorious" patriotic chorus "'Twas on the Neva River" (*A i bilo delo na Neve-reke*), which he chose to write for the opening panorama of Novgorod. The words of the chorus detail Nevsky's past heroism—his victory on July 15, 1240, over Swedish warriors at one of the tributaries of the Neva—while also warning Russia's variable roster of enemies against crossing the border. Prokofiev brings the chorus to a close with a plagal cadence whose tonic chord lacks a stabilizing fifth. The sound is archaic and (taking into account the text) inconclusive. It suggests a grander future resolution after a grander future battle. Fittingly, in the final celebratory scene in the film the music of the chorus is repeated, this time with doubled rhythmic values, harmonization in tenths à la Mikhaíl Glinka,

and an extended cadential progression to a thickly scored, fully voiced B-flat major chord. The singers fall silent at the end of the film, but in the *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata, they remain at full strength to toast the nation's subjugation of foreign thieves in a grand battle: "Celebrate, Rus', our motherland!" (Veselisya, Rus', rodnaya mat'!).³⁴ On pages 29–33 of the scenario, Prokofiev precisely outlines his plans for a second patriotic chorus, "Arise, Russian People" (Vstavayte, lyudi russkiye), which would become, after some simplifying and abbreviating, the most popular number in the score. The chorus, he writes, "sounds during the entire scene of [the Russians'] mobilization," but "in different guises" in "the orchestra" and "the voices." Prokofiev, in discussion with Eisenstein, decided to record the first two verses, which summon Novgorod's peasants to rally in defense of their land, in a mezzo piano to mezzo forte range, and to record the forward-looking final verse, which warns any and all "foes" that they "shall not occupy Rus'" (vragam na Rus' ne khazhivat') in the forte to fortissimo range. This chorus, like the last one, ends with a plagal cadence on an unstable chord.

While it was being recorded, Prokofiev told Volsky that the third vocal number in the score, the mezzo-soprano aria "Respond, Bright Falcons" (Otzovitesya, yasnī sokoli) of the post-battle (Field of the Dead) episode, sounded "strange" even to his own ears, like a conscious or unconscious adaptation from an epic Borodin or Rimsky-Korsakov opera.³⁵ (The mezzo-soprano aria most readily brings to mind the lament of the long-suffering Yaroslavna for her husband in act 4 of Borodin's *Prince Igor*; the falcon is a prominent metaphor in the lament and the opera as a whole.³⁶) The feeling of de-familiarization perhaps related to the fact that Prokofiev at first intended to distribute the aria in different guises in different scenes in the film, rather than assigning it intact to a single scene. Its mournful strains would have lent gravitas to the battle preparations which, in the final cut, come across as uncomfortably lighthearted. Shot 356 (showing Nevsky and his longtime comrades Vasilii Buslay and Gavriilo Oleksich assembled at the top of Raven Rock on the eastern shore of Lake Peipus) was to have involved at least part of the aria. Another part—the introduction—would have sounded in the orchestra at shot 303, a brief scene involving Nevsky's warriors skiing downhill. Had these fragments been preserved, they would have added emotional weight to a cinematic portrayal that could not, for artistic and nonartistic reasons, bear such weight. Whereas the patriotic choruses address the future, the aria is an interior monologue, addressing the past.

The verses for these numbers came from the well-known poet Vladimir Lugovskoy, who was brought into the *Alexander Nevsky* project by Pavlenko, a close friend of his at the time. Lugovskoy needed the work: he had come under attack for ideological deficiencies in *Literaturnaya gazeta* and *Pravda*.³⁷ The articles in question, centering in the first instance on a reprint edition of his poems from 1923–24 and in the second instance on his 1938 collection *October Verses (Oktyabrskkiye stikhi)*, sent his career into a tailspin. Together with the verses for *Alexander Nevsky*, which he wrote under a cloud, Lugovskoy also provided Prokofiev with folklore-derived and -inspired texts for *Ivan the Terrible* and, in January 1950, the text of a “Soldier’s Marching Song,” the latter a commission from Muzgiz arranged by Lugovskoy. In his annotated 1951–52 work list, Prokofiev reveals that he had “proposed writing an entire cycle of such songs, but in view of a lack of understanding of the first one the cycle was not continued.”³⁸ Although the “Soldier’s Marching Song” was “conditionally approved” by Muzgiz, it was not, in the end, sanctioned for publication.³⁹

The Lugovskoy settings in *Alexander Nevsky* were, in marked contrast, successful. After 1948, when many of Prokofiev’s works were barred from performance, “Arise, Russian People” continued to be heard on State Radio along with excerpts from *Romeo and Juliet*. “It’s as though I haven’t composed anything else!” Prokofiev complained to his older son.⁴⁰

Alexander Nevsky also includes a non-Russian text—the Latin chant assigned to the Teutonic crusaders—but it was compiled by Prokofiev himself. The words are wittily nonsensical: “Peregrinus, expectavi, pedes meos, in cymbalis,” which roughly translate as “A sojourner, I waited, my feet, with cymbals.”⁴¹ In a 1939 article, published in heavily edited form in the collection *Soviet Historical Film (Sovetskiy istoricheskiy fil'm)*, Prokofiev explained that his original “inclination was to use authentic music of the thirteenth century” for the Teutonic crusaders, but that his “acquaintance with Catholic canticles of the thirteenth century was enough to show that this music had become so far removed from us during the past seven centuries, so emotionally alien, that it could no longer adequately stimulate the spectator’s imagination. Therefore it seemed more ‘advantageous’ not to present it as it really sounded at the time of the Battle on the Ice, but in the style in which we now imagine it.” The same precept, the composer continues, applied to the chorus “’Twas on the Neva River,” which “needed to be given in a modern guise, leaving aside the question of how it might have been sung 700 years ago.”⁴²

The source from which Prokofiev borrowed the Latin words was exceptionally modern: Stravinsky's 1930 *Symphony of Psalms*.⁴³ The text of this three-movement score comes from David's Psalms in the Latin version of the Vulgate (as translated from the Greek rather than the Hebrew).⁴⁴ In the *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata, Prokofiev added the word *est* to his Latin script. It is not found in *Symphony of Psalms*, but it might be a footnote of sorts, since *es* and *t* add up to the first two letters of Stravinsky's surname in the Latin alphabet. Prokofiev enjoyed letter games of this sort, especially when they came at his Parisian rival's expense.⁴⁵

In *Alexander Nevsky*, Prokofiev parodies Stravinsky's parodic approach to text setting, which privileged the sound of words, their phonic contour, over their semantic content, what they express. In *Symphony of Psalms*, phrases are often set with the accents in the wrong places and masked by the lower brass- and percussion-laden orchestration. Prokofiev acknowledged his Stravinsky borrowing, but explained that, in *Alexander Nevsky*, the borrowed words "have no literal meaning."⁴⁶

The marginalia on the scenario and the sketches indicated that Prokofiev conceived the Latin (Catholic) chant and ostinato-driven attack music of the Teutonic crusaders, and much of the clamorous, percussion-filled music of the Battle on the Ice, in advance of the filming.⁴⁷ He expanded and enriched the contents of these sections of the score after seeing the raw footage. He composed most of the first part of the three-part battle, but paused when it came to the dramatic highlights of parts two and three: the death of the lad Savka (and the subsequent, grotesque use of his body to block spears), Vasiliy's exhortation to Gavriilo to show some courage; Nevsky's humiliating defeat of Graf German von Balk, the master of the Teutonic Order; and the climactic breakup of the ice. Prokofiev reminded himself, on the back of page 61 of the scenario, to write the music only after seeing "how [the footage] will be edited." On the back of page 63, he added: "Music to be put aside until I see it." His and Eisenstein's logic was simple: for the continuous through-composed action scenes in the film, they allowed the structure of the music to determine the structure of the visuals; for the discontinuous, fragmentary scenes, the opposite happens.

Prokofiev sought at times to translate sight into sound. By modulating from the minor to the major and stressing the upper registers of the orchestra, he ensured that the music for the climax of the battle "brightened, like a meteor" (page 64). Elsewhere (page 56), he decided to replicate the effect of close-up shots by placing instruments in front of the microphone and having

them blow, sometimes overblow, “directly into the ear.” (The effect is pronounced in the battle’s denouement, where a four-measure Teutonic fanfare motive is subject to acoustic distortion and dissonant contrapuntal overlay. Once monumental, the motive becomes coarse and trivial.) Beyond finding these indirect correlations between the music and the visuals, Prokofiev was also confronted with the challenge of finding direct ones. Eisenstein asked him to imitate the sounds of thudding hooves, clanking swords, and buckling ice in the orchestra. The latter received the most elaborate treatment: Prokofiev composed five measures of music for crash cymbals, glockenspiel, snare drum, tambourine, tam-tam, timpani, and lower strings that could be repeated as often as needed to reinforce the sensation of the ice cracking, imploding, and engulfing the foreign profaners of Russian terra firma. The din of the pitched and unpitched instruments reflects the violent chaos of the visual events, while the lower strings, which descend in the last measure of the sequence from the dominant to the tonic of the key (F major), offer a long-postponed sense of resolution. The battle, a thirty-five-minute jamboree of thumping and whacking, has ended.

In an overview of the score, the semiotician Philip Roberts comments that “the visual irony of white swallowing up white, and, indeed (to a Western audience), of white being linked with evil and Roman Catholicism and black with good and Russian folk motives, is paralleled in Prokofiev’s score by the ‘medieval’ organum-type harmonies of the Latin pilgrim’s hymn which are linked with the antagonists, and the melodically rich but harmonically naïve songs which are linked with the Russian protagonists.”⁴⁸ The details are inaccurate—Prokofiev neither uses “organum-type harmonies” nor, obviously, a “Latin pilgrim’s hymn” to depict the Teutonic crusaders⁴⁹—but Robert’s basic point is generally well taken: the score privileges binary oppositions. It also, however, dominates the film like few other scores of the period, strengthening both the sentiments of the script and providing (in advance of the invention of the synthesizer and the development of multi-channel recording equipment) special effects. The music, Roberts argues, is “not *able* to be conventional enough to escape being intrusive,” by which he means that it avoids the kind of musical clichés that begin to inform Hollywood film in the 1930s.⁵⁰

In *Alexander Nevsky*, the triumph of the Russians over their opponents becomes a triumph of musical perspective. The conclusion of the Battle on the Ice witnesses a metamorphosis of the Latin chant and the ostinato patterns that embellish it: the music is no longer heard through the ears of the

enemies but through the ears of the heroes, in debased guise. In the Teutonic bivouac scene, Eisenstein depicts a hunched black monk playing the anachronistically harmonized strains of the chant on a portative organ, while two others tend to the bellows. The pitches are repeated in consonant fortissimo by an invisible chorus: the filmgoer hears the music both objectively and subjectively, both as it is (at the start of the scene) and as it is idealized by the crusaders. This same duality applies to the depiction of Nevsky's soldiers: in the Russian encampment scene, the visual image of Savka blowing a *rozhok* is reproduced by a multi-tiered fanfare. The sound is bigger than life, much like the nationalist cause it venerates.

On page 71 of their scenario for the Field of the Dead scene, Vasilyev and Tissé cryptically describe "a female figure [the Novgorod maiden Olga] moving against an illuminated backdrop. A lonely woman's song begins. She sings about brave men." In his music for the scene, Prokofiev at first planned to interweave verses of the song—the mezzo-soprano aria "Respond, Bright Falcons"—with the tolling of funeral bells. The bells are not heard in the finished film, however. The aria occupies the Field of the Dead scene alone, becoming the basis for a novel sound effect. Vasiliy, dazed but relieved to be alive, calls out to his comrade (and rival for Olga's affections) Gavril. Gavril certifies that he, too, is alive, and Vasiliy asks him if he can "hear the voice calling out to us" which could either be Olga's voice (she appears to be calling out their names as she ambles through the torch-lit plain) or the voice of the professional singer on the soundtrack. And then, as the valiant warrior asks his question, he looks straight into the camera, suggesting that he is not, in fact, speaking to Gavril, but to the viewers of the film in the theater—to the Soviet public.



As this haunting highlight confirms, *Alexander Nevsky* blurs, for didactic purposes, the relationship between on- and off-screen, real and imagined sound. Eisenstein did not discuss the eerie effect of this infiltration in his description of the filmmaking process. He instead focused on a more abstract matter: his attempt to create sound-sight correspondences *without* recourse to didacticism.

The concept of the sound-sight correspondence is defined at length in the fourth chapter of his 1942 book *The Film Sense*, "Form and Content: Practice." Eisenstein claims that he avoided using Prokofiev's music simply to enhance the visceral impact in the film—although there are, of course,

numerous passages in which consonance and high registers denote good and dissonance and low registers denote bad. He instead imagined the music articulating the inner logic of certain images: the shape of the lines etched by the landscape and the characters, the contrasts between light and dark, and the passage of the viewer's eye from left to right across the screen. His analysis is painterly because his film is painterly: the middle scenes involve long static shots that serve to stress the importance of a historical giant (Alexander Nevsky) and a monolithic event (the Battle on the Ice). Instead of coordinating the music and visuals along narrative lines, he sought to combine their common geometric shapes. The two processes sometimes yield the same results. Although Eisenstein disliked "platitudinous...visualizations" of music, he did not wholly avoid them.⁵¹

Prokofiev wrote the music for the film before and after it was shot. The music and visuals complement, rather than complete, each other, a situation that prompted the philosopher and film theorist Gilles Deleuze to ask: "Since the silent visual image already expressed a whole, how we can be sure that the sound and visual whole is not the same, or if it is the same, does not give rise to two redundant expressions?"⁵² Each medium, Deleuze proposes, is on its own so powerful, so complete, as to render the other medium superfluous.

Although Eisenstein allowed for deviations, he believed that, by and large, audiences fixate on the same things: a jagged outline on the right side of the frame, for example, or a scalar descent on the last beat of a measure. He described music in terms of phrase lengths, meter changes, and harmonic contrasts, without acknowledging that the ear also perceives timbre, texture, and rhythm. His discussion of *Alexander Nevsky* focuses on the pre-battle dawn episode, in which Nevsky's all-volunteer force awaits battle atop Raven Rock. Melodic mutations increase the tension and govern the pacing of the scene. One such mutation, Eisenstein claims, marks the "farewell embrace" between Vasiliy and Gavriilo, which, like "the close-up shots of the German knights' helmets," could only have taken place when the music changes "its character from one that can be expressed in long shots and medium shots of the attack to one that demands rhythmic visual beats, close-ups of galloping and the like."⁵³ Here, evidently, the writing of the music occurred around the same time as the editing of the visuals, resulting in a compelling audio-visual montage.

Eisenstein formalized his theoretical principles after the fact, arguing for a degree of abstraction that neither his film's subject matter nor the

circumstances of its commissioning could embrace. One senses that he did not respect himself improvising at his desk and felt that he had to leave posterity a tablet of rules. He excludes ideological matters from his musings, choosing instead to describe the film that would have been, that might have been, had he not been burdened with the task of creating a national myth.

The national myth proved to be a runaway hit. *Alexander Nevsky* was previewed at Mosfilm on November 6 and the House of Cinema (Dom kino) on November 23, 1938. The December 1 general release generated an avalanche of positive reviews, classroom discussions, pre- and post-screening lectures, and both literate and semiliterate letters of acclaim and critique to the director.⁵⁴ Eisenstein had honorably fulfilled his assigned task of “blurring together . . . the Russian and Soviet past” in anticipation of military conflict with the Third Reich.⁵⁵ However, the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Nonaggression Pact abruptly terminated the festivities. Like *Semyon Kotko*, *Alexander Nevsky* was withdrawn from circulation; unlike *Semyon Kotko*, it was re-released, and reacclaimed, when the pact was annulled and the creation of anti-German art became the moral obligation of Soviet artists. Prokofiev’s extravagant score for the film demonstrated that he was, as Stalin purportedly said to Eisenstein, “a good Bolshevik after all.”⁵⁶

The film score and the cantata derived from it merited a Stalin Prize, and Prokofiev’s supporters advocated his belated awarding of one in 1941. Khrapchenko, however, remained unconvinced of Prokofiev’s patriotism. In his January 6, 1941, report on the Stalin Prize Committee deliberations, he summed up the decision against him in a single blunt sentence: “For a long time S. S. Prokofiev resided abroad.”⁵⁷ At the time, nothing could atone for his protracted exposure to Western values, not even jingoistic choruses like “Arise, Russian People.”

Prokofiev’s service to Soviet power during the Second World War erased the doubts about his ideological orientation. His second, much more intense collaboration with Eisenstein caused new concerns, but he, unlike the director, avoided direct critique.

Ivan the Terrible

The genesis of Eisenstein’s two-part *Ivan the Terrible* film is well documented, although the structure and function of Prokofiev’s music for it is not.⁵⁸ Eisenstein received the commission on January 11, 1941. He began the scenario following a period of assisted research and general background reading that included

historical chronicles, legends, ballads, the Bible, and works by (among many others) Sigmund Freud, Johann von Goethe, Karamzin, and Shakespeare. He described the project in broad strokes in an article in *Izvestiya*: “We all met him in our childhood and youth,” Eisenstein writes of his cinematic protagonist. “His strange, romantic figure haunted the imagination.”⁵⁹ This rather mild comment is followed by a paraphrase of the official account of Ivan’s life, which omits the multitudinous horrors of his reign in favor of “forgotten” details about his proto-Stalinist political and military achievements.⁶⁰

Eisenstein first reminds his readers that Ivan became the Grand Prince of Moscow in 1533 at the astonishingly young age of three, and immediately and arrogantly foresaw great deeds for himself. Upon assuming the title of tsar (the first in Russian history) in an unprecedentedly elaborate coronation at age seventeen, he launched a campaign to improve trade routes and reclaim ancestral land occupied by the Mongol Tatars. (Although Ivan built a port on the river Narva in 1550, Russia lacked regular access to the Baltic Sea trade: foreign merchants preferred to deliver goods to the ports held by the Livonian Order.) He captured Kazan in 1552 and Astrakhan in 1556, liquidating their Tatar inhabitants and putting an end to a flourishing slave trade. Eisenstein highlights the effectiveness of Ivan’s loyal guard—the *oprichniki*—against his enemies. He also touches on Ivan’s decision to launch what became the disastrous bloodletting of a quarter-century war with Livonia and the defection of Ivan’s longtime advisor, Andrey Kurbsky, to the enemy side. “By freeing [the Tsar’s] history from lies and distortions, and basing it on those aspects of the epoch expressed by Marx, the image of the 16th-century Russian State looks entirely different,” Eisenstein concludes. His future film would tackle the problem of depicting the sixteenth-century “poet of the idea of the State.”⁶¹ The twentieth-century “poet,” he obligatorily implies, is Stalin.

These are the essential plot elements of *Ivan the Terrible*, but plot is of minor relevance to a film that consists of perplexing non-narrative fragments. The footage that survives Eisenstein’s five-year struggle with himself, with Prokofiev, and with the Committee on Cinema Affairs is essentially a collection of drafts, unfinished and unfinishable, a jigsaw puzzle without a border. Eisenstein filled dozens of notebooks with plans and ideas; these are projections rather than formulations, conceived without interference, geared toward approximate or hypothetical realization. He perhaps shared his faith in drafts with Prokofiev: both artists recognized that caterpillars did not rely on butterflies to exist. Given the constraints imposed on him by the Committee on Cinema Affairs, Eisenstein seems to have determined that the most powerful

ideas were the least incarnate ones. According to his colleague Mikhail Romm, who problematically defined *Ivan the Terrible* Part II as a “tragedy of tyranny,” Eisenstein took the news that the film had been barred from release with “surprising calmness—he had a premonition, he knew this would happen.”⁶²

What exists of *Ivan the Terrible* is self-reflexive—the camera’s eye constantly looks at itself—and deeply personal, an exploration of the relationship between the artist and his subject. Part I is considered to be much more conformist in its representation of Ivan than Part II, which shows him sliding into near-madness, sacrificing what German idealist philosophy—and Russian “mystic” Symbolism—would term the world of objects for the world of essences. Shadows, sleep, poison goblets, and near-death experiences loom large in the drama. Ivan forfeits reason in search of a utopian ideal, an “abstraction” known as the “Great Russian State.”⁶³ For Eisenstein, this ideal became no less fictional than the cinematic depiction of its pursuit. The closing lines of his scenario for *Ivan the Terrible* Part III find Ivan alone on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, having finally carved a trading route for Russia through Livonia. He crosses a killing field to confront the waves, upon which he casts a calming spell.⁶⁴ There is nothing in front of him and nothing behind. This is the image of an individual who remains intact while everything else is shattered, but the preceding events in the scenario suggest the opposite, that *he* is the one who is shattered. In pursuit of a harsh nationalist ideal and in defiance of his own mortality, he has forfeited the higher integrated ideal of Christian faith. This concept is laid bare in the middle scene of Part II, as Ivan rejects the authority of the Church in order to impose his own will on man and nature.

The scenario passed through several revisions in 1941 and 1942.⁶⁵ The anti-German, anti-Polish sentiments of the text rose to the surface while the theme of Ivan’s loneliness, a crucial element of the first draft, subsided. Eisenstein absorbed input from his assistant Lev Indenbom while also seeking advice from the eminent (official) historians Sergey Bogoyavlensky and Militsa Nechkina—who, like Eisenstein, had been evacuated to Alma-Ata during the war. He felt sufficiently confident about the scenario’s initial prospects, however, to inform Prokofiev, in a December 23, 1941, letter from Alma-Ata to Tbilisi, that

Terrible will be filmed. It appears I will begin at winter’s end. Now I’m finishing the scenario and will send it with the next courier. At the beginning of next year it will be possible to form an agreement and meet, etc.

It came out in two parts, engaging to the highest degree. Comrade composer is granted great freedom in all directions.⁶⁶

The courier (Nikolay Sliozberg) brought Prokofiev the scenario in March, with Eisenstein encouraging Prokofiev “to begin the music whenever is convenient. I will begin filming at summer’s end. You can begin in the spring, the summer, the fall, even the winter—whenever is most opportune.”⁶⁷

Prokofiev took on the project, informing Eisenstein in a March 29, 1942, letter that he was “writing up the last measures of *War and Peace*” but would be able “to bend to [the director’s] yoke in the near future.”⁶⁸ He arrived in Alma-Ata to begin work on the score on June 15—the meandering trip from Tbilisi took seventeen days—settling with Mira in the modest Dom Sovetov (House of Soviets) hotel, jam-packed at the time with filmmakers, writers (including Lugovskoy, Paustovsky, and Shklovsky), and composers. Since neither the scenario nor the thematic plan for *Ivan the Terrible* had been completed, Eisenstein was hardly in a position to provide what he called its “specific features and themes” to Prokofiev, leaving him with some precious time to work on the orchestration of *War and Peace*.⁶⁹ The *Ivan the Terrible* scenario received provisional approval from the Committee on Cinema Affairs on September 5; the thematic plan was finished earlier, on August 14.⁷⁰ Both documents bear witness to Eisenstein’s interest in fashioning the cinematic equivalent of an operatic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the principal point of reference being Wagner’s *Die Walküre*, which Eisenstein had directed at the Bolshoy Theater in 1940.

While developing the scenario and thematic plan, the director relied extensively on Lugovskoy’s advice. The poet had met with Prokofiev in Tashkent, Uzbekistan (while the composer was en route to Alma-Ata) to discuss the types of songs to be used in the film. Lugovskoy’s June 13, 1942, letter to Eisenstein indicates that Prokofiev composed the songs to order:

I met with Prokofiev. He stayed overnight with me, and I had the opportunity in the morning to read through most of the songs with him (besides “The Beaver,” the extra one, and some trifles that I don’t have with me).⁷¹ He spoke highly of them. The potential placement of the overture either before or after the main titles elicited some puzzlement. He also wondered if the canonicity of the furnace play would

be understood by the modern viewer, but he seemed quite interested in it. I told him that we'd planned out all the songs together and gave all kinds of passing explanations, which, of course, were only a weak approximation of your directorial concept.

Don't forget, dear patron, about the popularity of those songs that you selected for this purpose. Of course, the overture and the oath can be condensed and rearranged however preferable, depending on your and Prokofiev's decision. We'll work up the rest together.⁷²

Hoping to preserve the formula that had worked so well in *Alexander Nevsky*, Lugovskoy insisted that the music of *Ivan the Terrible* be accessible, yet his actual poetic choices accorded with Eisenstein's darker cinematic conceits. The folkloric "Song of the Beaver" (*Pesnya pro bobra*), the one song he identifies by name, is performed by Ivan's boyarina aunt Yefrosiniya Staritskaya, who wants to see her dim-witted son Vladimir on the throne.⁷³ It occurs twice in Part II, first in the guise of a macabre lullaby, then as a macabre lament—two genres that are intertwined (many lullabies, after all, have a morbid lining, predicting the death of the child in sleep).

The disquieting effect of "The Song of the Beaver" resides in its mutation from a soothing strophic ballad into a violent through-composed tableau. Staritskaya loses herself in it, becoming spellbound by the words and the strident sounds she imagines underscoring them. The performance begins as a recitation of long-known verses and ends in near-demented improvisation. Prokofiev narrates her mental journey, transforming a rocking ostinato pattern in the strings (outlining the tonic and diatonic triads of B minor) into the strains of hunting horns and drums, and then into the strains of Ivan's coronation music. Through the transitions, Staritskaya mutters a portentous, nonpitched line of text, "The more [the beaver] bathed, the dirtier he became" (*Ne vîkupalsya, ves' vîgryaznilsya*), and then lodges herself in mantra-like repetitions of an A–E–A cadential gesture to the words "[He] dried himself down, he shook himself down, he looked around, he glanced around" (*Bobyor nasushivalysya, otryakhivalsya, osmatrivalsya, oglyadivalsya*). Whole- and half-step modulations away from B minor betray Staritskaya's fragile hold on reality. Dissonant "stinger" harmonies mark her account of the panicked beaver being stalked, captured, and skinned. The gory scene mutates in Staritskaya's mind into a triumphant

image of her son Vladimir, having wondrously supplanted Ivan as tsar, donning a cloak made out of the hide. Her final words, “to deck out Tsar Vladimir” (tsarya Volodimira obryaditi), are underscored by an orchestral simulacrum of a church chorus.

Lugovskoy's words and Prokofiev's music realize a prophecy that Eisenstein's visuals do not. Though Ivan is out of sight when “The Song of the Beaver” is performed, it nonetheless seems to affect him, becoming a subliminal prod, “the last decisive stimulus,” in Tatiana Egorova's words, for the “annihilation of [Staritskaya's] family.”⁷⁴

Besides “The Song of the Beaver,” Lugovskoy refers in his June 13 letter to Eisenstein to his text for the liturgical drama “The Fiery Furnace,” which serves an allegorical purpose in the film. But his most impressive contribution goes altogether unmentioned: his text for the “Dances of the *Oprichniki*” (Plyaski oprichnikov) of Part II. As the Slavacist Avril Pyman observes, the “menacing one-stress refrain” of the dances almost exactly matches that of the 1906 quasi-folkloric poem “Merrymaking in Russia” (Vesel'ye na Rusi) by the Russian “mystic” Symbolist writer Aleksandr Blok. Lugovskoy's command “Da prikolachivay!”—which Pyman translates as “And nail it fast!”—mimes Blok's “Da pritopivay!”: “And tap out the rhythm with your foot!” The reference could only have been intentional, since, as Pyman concludes, Blok's text invokes the medieval allegorical image of “Death herself towering over Russia.”⁷⁵ This is exactly the image that the *oprichniki* project in the frenzied, soul-less bacchanalia that concludes Part II, an episode that Eisenstein, making use of Agfa color film stock from Berlin (a spoil of the Red Army defeat of the Nazis), shot in crimson red.

Eisenstein's thematic plan indicates that Ivan's principal theme, nicknamed “A Storm Approaches,” would be heard four times in Part I: in the overture, in the prologue showing Ivan as a boy, at the end of the scene showing the death of his wife, Anastasiya Romanovna (she is poisoned in her bedchamber by Staritskaya), and in the epilogue.⁷⁶ According to Leonid Kozlov, the nickname stems from the original scenario for the film, which fixates on the horridness of feudal Russia. The film represents Ivan's reign as the ear-splitting “thunder” that dissipated the “black clouds” of the feudal period.⁷⁷

Although heard in its most explicit form only these four times, echoes, paraphrases, and transformations of the theme—a B-flat major march offset by ascending and descending sixteenth-note patterns in the violins—permeate the soundtrack. (The theme, for all its bellicosity, bears an archaic element: the substitution of the pitch E natural for E flat in the accompaniment

suggests the Lydian mode.) The theme recurs in a quasi-liturgical guise at the end of Part I, which features one of the most famous images in the Eisenstein corpus: the colossal profile of the Tsar looming over the Russian people, who flow in single file over the horizon (from Moscow to Alexandrova Sloboda) to entreat him on hands and knees to resume his rule. Prokofiev here casts the Tsar as a demiurge, the literal creator of the world—albeit one who has willfully abandoned his creation. A subsequent metamorphosis of the theme, intended for the Part III scene of penitence, but also underscoring the Part I statement “I cannot rule the realm without the threat of force” (*Ne možno tsaryu tsarstvo bez grozi derzhati*), depicts him as Lucifer, a fallen but still light-bearing angel. The theme is introduced by a latticework of chromaticism in the strings; the opening intervals, accordingly, are compressed from whole to half steps. A fourth, “ironic” variant of the theme, running backward and forward in the woodwinds, underscores the shrewdness of Ivan’s dealings with his enemies and of their dealings with him. It is heard throughout Part II.⁷⁸

The thematic plan calls for the inclusion of a popular song (one that, in Eisenstein’s prescription, “everyone” should be able to sing) titled “Ocean-Sea” (*Okeyan-more*). Prokofiev composed it to Lugovskoy’s verses. This part of the film was to have comprised a concatenation of images from Ivan’s unhappy childhood; the song was to have been sung by his nurse in the scenes framing the murder of his mother. But rather than a commentary on that tragic event, “Ocean-Sea” serves the broader purpose of instilling within Ivan a sense of future greatness, of the need to overcome obstacles preemptively, before they unite and overwhelm him. It furnishes psychological justification for his harsh, unsympathetic actions, actions that culminate in the expansion of Russia’s boundaries to the Baltic Sea.

“Ocean-Sea” begins as a contralto solo but ends as a choral ode; Prokofiev elevates a meditative song to an epic plane. He and Eisenstein planned to include its opening strains, meta-diegetically, in four additional scenes in Parts I and II of the film: during Ivan’s speech in the Uspensky Cathedral about the expansion and unification of Russia; following his unanticipated recuperation from near-fatal illness; in the “Dances of the *Oprichniki*”; and in the Livonian battle scenes. Despite the careful planning, the song never made it into the film, owing to the prohibition of the prologue by the Committee on Cinema Affairs.

Eisenstein and Prokofiev next map out their intentions in the thematic plan for the “Song of Kazan” (*Kazanskaya pesnya*) which, like “Ocean-Sea,”

was intended as a lyrical crowd-pleaser. It would have been deployed in much the same fashion as “Arise, Russian People” from *Alexander Nevsky*. This song was not written; the only vocal music heard in the battle scene is a brief (fourteen-measure) choral march titled “The Tatar Steppe” (Step’ Tatarskaya) whose manuscript is presumed lost.

The thematic plan further describes the elaborate, beguiling music of “The Oath of the *Oprichniki*” (Klyatva oprichnikov), which Prokofiev cast in four different guises—chantlike recitative, song, dance, and unseen hummed chorus—but which was largely edited out. The loss of this particular music attests to the disorganization of his and Eisenstein’s collaboration, and the impositions placed on them by the Committee on Cinema Affairs. The rest of the thematic plan for Part I centers on “The Fiery Furnace” and “The Song of the Beaver,” which were both transferred to Part II. Eisenstein also planned at this stage to include a scene depicting the gruesome *oprichniki* campaign against the autonomous city of Novgorod. He first transferred the scene from Part I to Part II of the film, and then, in 1944, from Part II to the newly conceived Part III, which he did not complete. The requested background music for the scene went unwritten.

The plan for Part II is comparatively undeveloped, specifying music for the “galloping” *oprichniki*, liturgical music for Ivan’s confession for the atrocities his henchmen have committed in the cities of Novgorod and Pskov, background music for the execution of the *oprichniki* leader Aleksey Basmanov (wrongly suspected by Ivan of treason) by his son Fyodor, and background music for the apocalyptic final battle that brings the aged Ivan to the Baltic Sea. These last three items were eventually relocated by Eisenstein from Part II to III of the film. So, too, was a number—for a boisterous scene featuring Queen Elizabeth I—called “The Ballad of the Red-Haired Bess” (Ballada o Rizhey Bess). The scene was banned from the film, out of concern that it represented Ivan as an unapologetic Anglophile, too willing to align Russia diplomatically with England. The banning of the scene removed one of the few passages of real history from Part II. Unlike Part I, Part II is temporally and spatially hallucinatory, unhinged from actual events in Ivan’s life.



Political and logistical problems plagued the project from start to finish. Eisenstein had difficulties casting the parts and keeping up morale on the set, owing to shortages of electricity (provided to the studios only at night), food,

fuel, and other material goods. He wanted to cast the well-known comic actress Faina Ranevskaya in the role of the treacherous Staritskaya, but the chairman of the Committee on Cinema Affairs, Ivan Bolshakov, overruled him, declaring her “Jewish features” unsuitable for the part of a Russian noblewoman.⁷⁹ Paradoxically, the role went to another Jewish actress, the ill-tempered Serafima Birman, with whom Prokofiev had an unpleasant relationship of long standing. Eisenstein had difficulties of another sort in casting the part of Ivan’s wife, Anastasiya. He first offered it to the ballerina Galina Ulanova who, despite being flattered by the proposal, declined it—leaving him to scramble, late in 1943, to find a suitable substitute. He settled on Lyudmila Tselikovskaya, the wife of the celebrated actor Mikhaíl Zharov, to whom he had earlier allotted the role of Ivan’s servant Skuratov. For the title role he was fortunate enough to again secure the services of the mime actor and committed Communist Nikolay Cherkasov, who had earlier played the part of Alexander Nevsky.⁸⁰ The filmmaking process was of proportions as epic as the film’s subject matter.

Prokofiev worked with Eisenstein in the fall of 1942 and spring of 1943 in Alma-Ata, but the bulk of the music was written in 1944 and 1945 (in Moscow during the winters and outside of Ivanovo during the summers). Filming began on April 22, 1943; editing did not end (for Part II) until February 2, 1946. The dates of most of the twenty-nine items in Prokofiev’s annotated piano score cannot be determined. The Sikorski (Urtext) Edition of the score assembled by the Glinka Museum researchers Marina Rakhmanova and Irina Medvedeva in 1997 further confuses this issue, since it includes hypothetical reconstructions of music that did not end up in the film while excluding music that did. The origins of the rest of the music in the film—the twelve liturgical items that, with one exception, were not arranged by Prokofiev—remain entirely unclear.⁸¹ The question of origin is an extremely important one, because *Ivan the Terrible* was the first Soviet film to rely on liturgical music for positive and powerful rhetorical effect. (On September 5, 1943, Stalin announced a radical change in State and Party policy toward the Russian Orthodox Church, which explains the sudden lifting of the prohibition against religious music in concerts that year and, more pertinently, its inclusion in the score of *Ivan the Terrible*.)⁸² The iterations of the hymn “My Soul” (*Dusha moyá*) when Ivan expresses contrition for his actions, for example, underscore a central conceit of the film: the State cannot be put in order by rulers whose spirits are in disorder. Overall, the liturgical music attests to the iconicity of Eisenstein’s cinematic conception, his half

dreamscape, half Kabuki Theater meditation on the writing and rewriting of historical narratives.

The annotated piano score, written on fifty pages of manuscript paper of different types, contains twenty-nine dated and undated numbers.⁸³ A separate archival document, Lamm's realization of the orchestral score from Prokofiev's annotations, contains two other numbers.⁸⁴ The beguiling music for "The Oath of the *Oprichniki*" and "The *Oprichniki* and Vladimir" seems to have been the first that Prokofiev conceived for the film, and perhaps the only music, with the possible exception of the contralto song "Ocean-Sea," completed in Alma-Ata. "The Oath of the *Oprichniki*" did not make it into the film: in the opinion of Bolshakov and the Committee on Cinema Affairs, it depicted Ivan's loyal guard in a falsely negative light, whereas Stalinist revisionist historians described them in quasi-folkloric terms as a progressive force that vanquished the enemies of the State, hunting them down, tearing them up, and disposing of them (the *oprichniki* adopted as symbols a dog's head and a broom). Eisenstein managed to use part of the chromatic, murmured recitative that Prokofiev composed for "The Oath of the *Oprichniki*" in the balletic buildup to the climax of Part II, in which Ivan's black-robed legions escort Vladimir to his death. The discordant chanting, which is framed by shimmering strings, less suggests human beings than a force field, a vibrating power grid.

The "*Oprichniki* and Vladimir" scene, on which Eisenstein labored long and hard, did make it into the film. In a July 9, 1943, letter, he beseeched Prokofiev not to leave Alma-Ata for Perm (where he was expected to resume work on *Cinderella*) before the music was recorded:

Without you the chorus and recording will doubtless be bungled (*if you know what I mean!*). They are obviously flogging themselves to no avail in the rehearsals, thus it would be very, very desirable to plan your departure not for Monday, but for the next possible departure time afterward.⁸⁵

Eisenstein later requested that Prokofiev return from Perm to Alma-Ata at the end of October to complete the music for Part I of the film, but Prokofiev did not. He was again unable to make the trip, since he had been summoned back to Moscow to assist in the preparations for a prospective concert performance of *War and Peace* in December.

The performance never happened, even though Prokofiev, heeding previous advice from Shlifshteyn, had abandoned Eisenstein to attend to it.⁸⁶ “I’d like to hope that you aren’t too upset with me for not coming to Alma-Ata,” he wrote to Eisenstein on November 17, “I wasn’t able to.” Prokofiev adds that he had sent the music for “The Fiery Furnace,” and asks Eisenstein to forward “detailed outlines of those pieces” that he could compose ahead of the director’s return to Moscow.⁸⁷ The music for “The Fiery Furnace” is presumed lost: there survives, according to the Glinka Museum editors, merely a sketch of the central “Song of the Boys” (*Peniye otrokov*), which, for unknown reasons, was not included in the film.⁸⁸ Eisenstein appears to have patched together “The Fiery Furnace” using improvised choral singing. The Glinka Museum editors include a hypothetical reconstruction of “Song of the Boys”—based on the surviving sketch—in their score.⁸⁹

The available evidence suggests that, for *Ivan the Terrible* Part I, Prokofiev composed most of his music to match Eisenstein’s visuals. The difficult sound-recording process began in the late summer of 1944, after the belated return of the Mosfilm studios to Moscow, and after most of Parts I and II and a portion of Part III had been filmed. Eisenstein was now in a state of near-panic, having already been forced for logistical reasons to postpone the sound recording from March to July, and then, because he could not coordinate his work schedule with Prokofiev’s, from July to August. Prokofiev was not in Moscow in July to greet Eisenstein; he had decided to spend the summer at the Union of Soviet Composers retreat outside of Ivanovo, an agricultural-industrial city 300 kilometers to the northeast of the capital. In a July 30 telegram, Eisenstein pleaded with Prokofiev to “come at once,” to Moscow, because the delay was “threatening all of [his] plans for the release of both parts.”⁹⁰ Prokofiev resisted, claiming, in a letter dated July 31, that he had been patiently waiting in Ivanovo to receive additional materials related to the film and, during that time, had become involved in a new project: his Fifth Symphony. His progress was such that he could “under no circumstances pause it and switch to *Ivan the Terrible*.” Prokofiev pledged, however, to return to Moscow on August 15, after which he would “commit [himself] entirely” to the forsaken film, working “quickly and precisely.”⁹¹

Mira described the sound-recording process as follows:

Seryozha first looked at parts of the film in the studio. Then he wrote the music at home, and in doing so took into account the wishes that Sergey Mikhaylovich had voiced

while the film was being shown. Back in the studio: the music is recorded on tape with Seryozha at the piano; when singing is called for, he sings.⁹² Immediately afterward they go through more materials. On the next occasion the tape recording accompanies the pictures, and when Eisenstein is satisfied, work on the instrumentation begins. The material that has been orchestrated is recorded in the studio on tape (immediately with choir and orchestra). Sometimes up to four hours are needed to record two minutes of music, since Eisenstein and Seryozha (who attended all the recording sessions) are extremely demanding.⁹³

The work was not completed in August, as evidenced by a September 22 letter from Eisenstein (in Moscow) to Prokofiev (in Ivanovo). The letter included the revised scenario for the Kazan battle scene, along with “the seconds and markings so that you remember what is happening and what is desired in terms of character.”⁹⁴ The revision was doubtless prompted by the August pre-screening of Part I at the Committee on Cinema Affairs, where it did not fare particularly well. Although the altered Part I eventually earned a First Class Stalin Prize, it elicited mixed reactions. The co-author (with Eisenstein) of the scenario for *Alexander Nevsky*, Pavlenko, wrote a negative review of *Ivan the Terrible* in advance of its general release. Since the film was on its way to the theaters, the review was withdrawn from publication; in its place, *Pravda* printed a positive review by Vishnevsky, who described the film as a “great triumph” for Soviet cinema. His lone comment on the music was that it sounded “confident and free.”⁹⁵ Myaskovsky felt otherwise: “the music grunts somewhat, but in places it’s interesting.”⁹⁶

The completion and recording of the music for Part II was delayed by Prokofiev’s health problems. In a diary entry dated February 2, 1945, Myaskovsky reports that, about two weeks before, Prokofiev took a bad fall and suffered severe head trauma.⁹⁷ Although he never fully recovered from the accident, he managed during the summer (spent, once again, in Ivanovo) to resume full-time work. He informed Eisenstein, however, that he would not be able to return to *Ivan the Terrible* until at least October, which sent the director into despair: “This change puts my work in a catastrophic state,” he wrote to Prokofiev on August 1, “based on your promise of music for the dance we built the corresponding décor for the filming and adjusted all of our plans and the schedules for the actors’ arrival. Now everything will come

apart at the seams and you won't be able to gather up the threads!"⁹⁸ Two days later, Mira informed Eisenstein that Prokofiev "can't possibly write the music for the second part."⁹⁹ In his place, Prokofiev suggested that Gavriil Popov, a composer whose talent he esteemed, be hired for the project. He wrote a letter to Popov to this effect and asked Eisenstein to deliver it to him, but the director refused, leaving the door open for Prokofiev to return to the project when his health had improved.¹⁰⁰

In the fall, he managed to compose the two "Dances of the *Oprichniki*" for the concluding bacchanalia of Part II. Eisenstein shot the scene in a montage of crimson red (representing blood), gold (festive raiment), and black (death). Since Prokofiev could not spend extended periods of time in the studio, the director was obliged to tailor his visuals to match the timing of the precomposed music, which brought to an end the prospect of forging a fluid sight-sound dialogue. In a March 1947 lecture about the treatment of music and color in *Ivan the Terrible* Eisenstein confessed that adjusting "the pieces of filmed material" to "match exactly the beats in the music" ended up being an "awful job."¹⁰¹ As his health improved, Prokofiev occasionally ventured to the studio, but he worked on the score for the most part at home, entrusting Eisenstein's sound engineer (Volsky) to fine-tune the orchestration in his absence. Volsky notes that, in the second half of 1945, he met Prokofiev in private to discuss the project. "He sat at the upright piano, familiarized me with all the details of the score, demonstrated possible variants with one instrument replacing another and suggested, in order to make the best choice, listening to them with live orchestra. He made 'crib notes' so that I'd remember all of his suggestions. Work on the selection of the dubs of the recorded material was wholly entrusted to me. Prokofiev worked only in the theater of the studio, watching the edited scenes for which he needed to write music."¹⁰²

As noted, Part II was banned. On February 2, 1946, following the pre-screenings, Eisenstein submitted the film to the Committee on Cinema Affairs for assessment. That same night, at a gathering celebrating his receipt of a First Class Stalin Prize for Part I, he suffered a near-fatal heart attack.¹⁰³ The assessment went ahead on February 7, and both the film and its infirm director were denounced. (Prokofiev, its infirm composer, was spared the rod: the soundtrack was not a focal point of discussion.) A month later, on March 6, the Central Committee ruled that "the second part of the film *Ivan the Terrible* does not stand up to criticism in view of its anti-historical and anti-artistic qualities." The film was thus "prohibited from release."¹⁰⁴

The months ahead would witness further denunciations and would compel Eisenstein to issue, according to Stalinist ritual, an abject letter of regret.

Eisenstein contemplated reworking Part II, but his frail health prevented him from returning to the studio. On February 25, 1947, he and Cherkasov attended a Kremlin meeting to discuss the perceived failings of the film. Upon agreeing to represent Ivan less like a Shakespearean antihero, to improve the image of the *oprichniki* (despite their black garb, they resembled the Ku Klux Klan), to remove the shadows, and to reintroduce the Moscow people, Eisenstein received approval to re-create Part II (now combined with Part III) with a wholly rewritten script. According to the transcript of the meeting, Cherkasov told Stalin "I am sure the reworking will be a success," to which Stalin jovially replied, "God willing, every day would be like Christmas."¹⁰⁵

Part II was released finally in 1958. In 1962, the conductor Abram Stasevich, who recorded the soundtrack, transformed Prokofiev's score into a twenty-movement oratorio for soloists, chorus, and orchestra—with the task of linking the disparate movements together assigned to a narrator. Stasevich's oratorio is by no means an accurate representation of the soundtrack, nor, for that matter, are the six "songs and choruses" from *Ivan the Terrible* that were published as an appendix to the March 1958 issue of *Sovetskaya muzika*.

Film historians usually contend that Part I glorifies Ivan and Part II eulogizes him, charting a mental and physical decline. The audio-visual content of the film traces a less straightforward path, however. In the coronation scene, Ivan is showered over and over again in gold coins. Time and space wrap around him. He exists outside of the phenomenal world, alternately projecting light and dark. The chief visual symbols are icons, nontemporal likenesses of divine figures; the chief musical symbols are chants bearing titles like "Eternal Remembrance" (*Vechnaya pamyat'*) and "You Alone" (*Sam yedin yesi*). Over the course of the film, patterns of cause and effect, the logic of historical change as defined by Marx, are broken down to illustrate the cosmic forces to which humans can only helplessly submit. It is not surprising that Part II did not appeal to Stalin, who sought, through horrible means, to control time and space, to script existence in the manner of a film.¹⁰⁶

The Forefront of Soviet Music, 1944–1947

Before returning to Moscow from evacuation in 1943, Prokofiev began to make inquiries about obtaining permanent housing there. On August 12, he wrote to Atovmyan from Perm, where he was involved in *Cinderella*, with the news that, in January, he had communicated with Khrapchenko, the chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs, about “obtaining an apartment” in the capital. Khrapchenko was “sympathetic,” and Prokofiev asked Atovmyan “to let me know the current possibilities on this front. I seek, of course, to obtain an apartment in the center of the city, though not in the composers’ building.”¹ The issue would not be settled until the end of 1944, and would involve much haggling with Mossovet, as signaled by Mira’s January 4, 1945, comment: “Now we really do have apartment 210 on Mozhayskoye Shosse, building 11/13.”² The large two-and-a-half-room apartment (substituting for the two-room apartment Mossovet had offered Prokofiev the previous summer) was located on the sixth floor of a building near the Kiev train station. It had a balcony, a telephone (Prokofiev’s number was an extension of the number for the entire building; calls were monitored), and working gas. Tired of lugging suitcases between hotels and her parents’ residence, Mira claimed to like the apartment, but the ringing of the telephone, the constant clatter of the elevator doors, the banter of the neighbors, and the blaring of their radios irritated Prokofiev beyond measure. He had resisted moving into it, arguing instead for housing closer to the center, but he was advised by Khrapchenko to make do. Prokofiev would live on Mozhayskoye Shosse for less than four months, thereafter relocating

for health reasons to places outside of the city. One room of the apartment would remain in his possession until 1950. Atovmyan arranged to use it in Prokofiev's absence.³

In the summers of 1944 and 1945, Prokofiev and Mira were able to escape the constraints of wartime and post-wartime Moscow. For approximately three months each summer, they stayed at the Union of Soviet Composers retreat (a former imperial estate) outside of Ivanovo, which Prokofiev alternately nicknamed the "State Chicken Farm" and "State Pig Farm" in his letters to Atovmyan, owing to the presence of livestock on the grounds and the fact that some of the composers in residence worked in renovated farm buildings (Prokofiev composed in a glass-enclosed terrace overlooking a pond, Shostakovich in an erstwhile henhouse). "For wartime," Elizabeth Wilson writes, "the conditions were unique—composers enjoyed on the one hand the benefits of a kind of health farm, on the other an ideal haven to work in, plus the stimulus of the company of colleagues."⁴ Volleyball was the recreation of choice for the energetic, including the sports-loving Shostakovich; Prokofiev defaulted to strolls in the woods and board games. On June 10, 1944, the day after his arrival at the retreat, Prokofiev sent a note to Mira's mother reporting that he was "totally delighted by the place," since "our room is big and quiet and they feed us wonderfully. Best of all is the forest with its fresh young leaves, profusion of flowers, and aroma of [pine] needles!"⁵ The triteness of the note is tempered only by concerns about Mira's health: she had recently lost a lot of weight, and Prokofiev sought to assure her mother that he would see to her well-being. As a Stalin Prize laureate and recipient of the Order of the Red Banner of Labor (Orden Trudovogo Krasnogo Znameni), Prokofiev enjoyed greater benefits than most of his colleagues. Before leaving for Ivanovo, he arranged for Mira's parents to receive his allotment of Composers' Union food stamps.⁶ Often, he used his status to obtain goods beyond the reach of the average citizen: coffee, dried fruit, white flour, and sweets.

He and Mira stayed at the retreat until August 27. That evening they took the overnight train back to Moscow, forfeiting sleep (their carriage was loud) in favor of conversation with Shostakovich and his wife, Nina, who were also returning to the capital. Upon arrival, Prokofiev and Mira checked into the same room at the Hotel Moscow that they had occupied between October 1943 and January 1944. Prokofiev had by this time received the two-and-a-half-room apartment on Mozhayskoye Shosse, and had even obtained stationery showing the apartment's address and telephone number, but he delayed moving into it for as long as he could.⁷

The summer in Ivanovo had animated and bolstered him, but the time there had passed too quickly, as his resistance to Eisenstein's urgent demands that he return to the capital to finish up *Ivan the Terrible* attests. The collaborative atmosphere had precipitated a rethinking of his compositional priorities, specifically a turn away from the aesthetic and practical demands of stage and screen toward instrumental music. At Ivanovo, Prokofiev finished his Eighth Piano Sonata and the piano score of his Fifth Symphony; the latter would emerge as his most successful, least procedurally problematic score of the 1940s.

The Dividing Line

The inspiration for the Fifth Symphony came in part from Shostakovich—it bears structural and stylistic elements in common with that composer's own Fifth Symphony, the archetype of successful Soviet symphonism—but its most enthusiastic proponent, and the person who witnessed its completion at Ivanovo, was Dmitriy Kabalevsky, a member from 1939 to 1948 of the Orgkomitet of the Union of Soviet Composers who was about to become, in April 1945, responsible for the solicitation and assessment of works for broadcast. This comment from Mira's memoirs, dated July 26, 1944, attests to Kabalevsky's involvement: "Seryozha had only just finished the Andante from the Fifth Symphony when he noticed Kabalevsky from the terrace.... Kabalevsky convinced Prokofiev to play the Andante for him. At dinner that evening he called it 'first of all humane, second of all symphonic, and third of all simple—though without a loss of character.'"⁸ As his simultaneous work on the four movements progressed, Prokofiev repeatedly expressed his satisfaction with the symphony, the first that he had written in fourteen years. His confidence was bolstered by additional praise from Kabalevsky, Nina Makarova, Vano Muradeli, and Shostakovich when he unveiled the completed piano score to them on August 26. Myaskovsky extolled it in a pair of letters to Shlifshiteyn, who had facilitated the 8,000-ruble commission.⁹ Platitudes often masqueraded as accolades, Mira noted, but the overall reaction seemed genuine. To the delight of his supporters, Prokofiev produced an evocative score offsetting pastoral, ballroom, and military *topoi*, interpretable as a parable about the war—before, during, and after—and about civilization thwarting annihilation.

The Adagio, the third movement, opens with an elegiac waltz theme salvaged from the score for *The Queen of Spades*. The waltz cedes in the middle

section to a languid lament, with the asymmetrical accompaniment (steady triplets in the upper strings combating syncopated quarter notes in the lower strings) ceding to a bombastic, brass-and-percussion-laden sequence of dotted eighths. In the massive, violent climax of the middle section, the lament cedes to a funeral march, after which the skewed dance pattern returns intact, bearing no traces of trauma.

The Scherzo, the second movement, revisits two sections (Nos. 53–54) of the original 1935 ending of *Romeo and Juliet*. The recycled music forms the toccata opening and closing sections of the movement. For the middle section, Prokofiev wrote another waltz, whose disorienting, Spanish-style percussion recalls Ravel; the eight-measure transition into and out of this waltz, moreover, involves a shrill theme (harmonized by alternating tonic major and augmented sixth chords) evocative of Ravel's disciple George Gershwin. Excluding a fanfare motive that punctuates repetitions of the toccata theme, the movement maintains the character of a capricious digression. Its wit resides in the stitching together of the pastoral Musette and the urban Bal-Musette, the former a product of the French Baroque, the latter a product of French café culture.

Thus two works from the mid-1930s, *The Queen of Spades* and *Romeo and Juliet*, came in service of an orchestral score of self-consciously epic proportions. The Andante and Scherzo are framed by a sonata-allegro movement with what Prokofiev called a “dithyrambic” character, and a ritornello movement expressing “folk festiveness.”¹⁰ Prokofiev emphasized the affirmative, victorious character of the Fifth Symphony in his public pronouncements, stating in one Soviet source that his “fundamental conception” was “the triumph of the human spirit,” and in another that he sought to articulate “the greatness of the human spirit.”¹¹ He waxed less poetic in the American media, informing an unnamed journalist for *Time* that the Fifth Symphony “is about the spirit of man, his soul or something like that.”¹² The flip, one-size-fits-all nature of these remarks is only augmented by the fact that he used them again to describe his Sixth Symphony. Either he had become indifferent to the sameness of his own descriptive language or, much less cynically, he sought to stress the consistency of his creative outlook. If earlier in his career he had emphasized divine inspiration, now he stressed human potential. In his wartime and post-wartime statements, Prokofiev fashioned the discourse of Christian Science to accord with the discourse of Socialist Realism.

Prokofiev spoke in general terms about his approach to symphonic composition at the March 28 to April 7, 1944, plenary session of the Union of

Soviet Composers in Moscow. He comes across in the transcript as impatiently unimpressed by Shostakovich's wartime compositions. Training his sights on his rival's coolly received Eighth Symphony of 1943, Prokofiev lauds Shostakovich's "thinking, invention, and devising," but decries the "insufficient clarity of his melodic lines." Philosophical ideas are articulated at the expense of the actual sounding surface, he asserts, and calculation substitutes for inspiration. Prokofiev reminds his audience that "we often use the word 'compose,' but we don't always take into account what it means. To compose means to make up, to invent. My sense is that a mother who gathers her newborn into her arms and says 'And what are you getting up to now?' comes much closer to the meaning of this word than many composers when they write symphonies."¹³

The Fifth Symphony is a model of craftsmanship, with Prokofiev seeking, in the first and fourth movements, to integrate melodic material of altogether contrasting character. This material evolved over the course of some eleven years in his sketchbooks, but most of it dates from 1940 to 1944.¹⁴ Although the two movements are cast in conventional forms (sonata allegro and ritornello), Prokofiev avoids traditional means of development. He subjects his themes to expansion, extension, and mutation within individual subsections of the forms; disruptions and dislocations, accordingly, substitute for transitions. The B-flat major opening theme of the first movement, a languid arioso in three phrases, is interrupted in measures 8-11 by an E-flat minor chord, a dotted rhythmic figure evocative of a distant fanfare, and an ascending B-flat minor scale fragment. The asymmetric second theme bears points in common with the asymmetric first theme: they fill a similar range, and both involve a slippage between the dominant (F) and the augmented fourth (E natural) of the tonic B-flat major scale. As is typical of Prokofiev, the slippage is mirrored in other parts of the exposition by the substitution of the flattened mediant for the mediant and the leading tone for the tonic. In the Fifth Symphony, the destabilizing enrichment of the syntax has a dramatic purpose, lending the placid texture a strange feeling of disquiet.

The fourth movement offsets traces of the languid arioso of the first movement, an impish (*giocos*) clarinet solo in B-flat major (enriched with raised tonic, supertonic, subdominant, and dominant pitches) and a soaring hymn in D-flat major in the strings and brasses. The composer conceived the discordant final measures as an enthusiastic and tempestuous evocation of Bacchic revelry, calibrated for twentieth-century ears. The symphony's forms

are archaic but the syntax modern, with the tritone, rather than the fifth, providing structural coherence.¹⁵

The January 13, 1945, premiere, which Prokofiev conducted at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, glorified him in the eyes of the critics and the public. (The official assessment of the work by the Union of Soviet Composers came after the premiere.) The symphony immediately became a national success, and quickly, on the initiative of Koussevitzky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, an international one.¹⁶ Richter, who was in the audience for the premiere, absorbed the composer's glow: "The hall was probably lit as usual, but when Prokofiev stood up, it seemed as though the light poured down on him from on high. He stood there, like a monument on a pedestal."¹⁷ As Prokofiev prepared to give the downbeat for the first movement, the concert's host entered the stage to update the audience on the progress of the Red Army on its final march to Berlin. The composer paused; guns blasted in celebration in the distance. "There was something deeply significant, deeply symbolic in this," Richter adds, "as if this moment marked a dividing line in the lives of everyone present, including Prokofiev himself." On or around January 20, just days later, Prokofiev tumbled from that allegorical summit, collapsing and suffering a concussion in the Mozhayskoye Shosse apartment.

The fall was the result of a blackout, brought on by chronic high blood pressure, for which Prokofiev had not been treated, despite a similar fall in 1943 in a market in Alma-Ata.¹⁸ This time he almost died. Kabalevsky, just returned to Moscow from Helsinki, self-servingly recalls visiting Prokofiev in the apartment in February: "I'll never forget that sad visit. Prokofiev lay entirely motionless. At times he could not identify the people to whom he was talking and passed out. In a frail voice he asked a few questions about my encounter with Jean Sibelius and complained bitterly about the forced interruption of his work."¹⁹ In the rough draft of an unpublished reminiscence, Mira's father supplies additional details about Prokofiev's precarious state:

Mira telephoned: Sergey Sergeyevich has taken a bad fall, landing on his spine, hurting his head, and feels awful. During the next few days his condition worsened. The doctors confined him to bed. Toward the end of February his condition sharply deteriorated. Mira telephoned at 1 am in early March: "What can I do? He talks and talks; it's hard to make him out and I can't stop him." I had to get to him, but

I couldn't: my wife was ill and couldn't be left alone. Moreover, to reach Mozhayskoye Shosse from the center was difficult: the Metro had already closed, taxis weren't yet operating, and it would take too long to walk. I asked Mira to report on Sergey's condition by telephone. She called a little while later: he was calmer, drowsy.

The next day I was at Sergey and Mira's. I sat on the divan where Sergey lay with closed eyes. He had spoken little the last few days. It was difficult for him to speak; his condition was grave. His hands rested on the blanket, his fingers in constant motion. His body was still, his eyes closed, and his face pale—but his fingers kept moving....

Mira sent for me the next day. Sergey was being treated by Doctor Pokrovsky. The doctor was very worried; Sergey needed immediate hospitalization. In an hour he was taken by ambulance to the Kremlin hospital.²⁰

Prokofiev entered this hospital, located at the time across from the Lenin Library in central Moscow, on March 7. He received a course of treatment—including the application of leeches—for what would eventually be diagnosed as ventricular hypertrophy. On March 15, Myaskovsky was able to report in his diary that Prokofiev looked “relatively well, and feels better and better.”²¹ From April 9 to May 28, Prokofiev convalesced, on Eisenstein's instigation, at the exclusive Podlipki sanatorium in Barvikha, spending his better mornings and afternoons reading, strolling, and receiving visitors. He was not allowed to compose, but he apparently made a point of telling one of his visitors, Vladimir Vlasov, that he was working on his *Ode to the End of the War* “secretly...in my head.”²² Atovmyan tended to Prokofiev's requests for warm clothing—spring had come late; his room was cold—newspapers, and provisions. Mira, whose weight remained worryingly low, joined him at the sanatorium at her father's insistence (her treatment consisted of warm baths and exposure to ultraviolet light). “Seryozha feels quite well,” she wrote to her father on April 16, “but his blood pressure has increased somewhat.”²³ Such would become the pattern for much of the rest of his life: his health would gradually improve, allowing him to work full- or part-time, but then suddenly deteriorate, leaving him bedridden with blinding headaches and nosebleeds. By the time he left Barvikha for Moscow, however, he felt able-bodied, enthusing about an upcoming concert performance of *War*

and Peace at the Moscow Conservatory. Vlasov, the director of the Moscow Philharmonic, kept Prokofiev apprised of the progress of the rehearsals until he himself was able to hear them.

Yudina

This performance was prepared, on the instruction of the Committee on Arts Affairs, using singers and instrumentalists from the Bolshoy Theater, the Stanislavsky Theater, the State Symphony, the Chorus of the Republic (Respublikanskaya khorovaya kapella), and the Philharmonic. To be exact, it did not represent the premiere of the opera: that had taken place in Moscow on October 16, 1944, through the initiative of an ambitious young conductor named Konstantin Popov, who led the Ensemble of Soviet Opera of the All-Russia Theatrical Society (Ansaml' sovetskoy operi Vserossiyskogo Teatral'nogo Obshchestva).²⁴ Popov's performance, mounted in an inadequate space with piano accompaniment, featured seven of the eleven scenes from the opera, with a narrator reading from Tolstoy's novel as a means to bridge the missing scenes. Mira supplied the narrator with introductions to the two halves of the performance taken from Tolstoy's epilogue and the memoirs of the writer-soldier Davıdov.

Following this event, a modest success, the Committee on Arts Affairs granted approval for the large-scale concert performance of *War and Peace* at the Moscow Conservatory. Prompting came less from Popov and the Ensemble of Soviet Opera than from a foreign source: the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, whose director, Edward Johnson, had sought in 1943 to premiere *War and Peace*.²⁵ In response to Johnson's inquiries, Prokofiev wrote to Khrapchenko for permission to have the opera staged abroad, but was advised, as he expected he would be, that it first had to be staged in the Soviet Union, leaving him to express his frustration that "there were no signs of life on the part of the Bolshoy Theater."²⁶ The Metropolitan Opera continued to press for a staging, and VOKS also received an inquiry about it from the Royal Swedish Opera (Stockholm), but Khrapchenko's decision was, Prokofiev learned, "firm and final: *first in Moscow*."²⁷ The growing foreign interest in *War and Peace* eventually motivated the Committee on Arts Affairs to approve, in lieu of a costly full-scale staging of the opera, the concert performance under Samosud's direction. Samosud had lost his post at the Bolshoy Theater in the summer of 1943, and sought with the performance to reestablish his credentials within the Soviet opera world.²⁸

He conducted nine of the eleven scenes on June 7 and eight of them on June 9 and 11, 1945 (scene 6, “Pierre Bezukhov’s Study,” scene 8, “Shevardino Redoubt during the Battle of Borodino,” and then scene 9, “A Street in French-Occupied Moscow,” were excised). Once again, a narrator provided the details of the missing scenes. Prokofiev attended several rehearsals, and the first and the last of the performances—a headache kept him from the second one—publicly expressing delight that the opera had at last received a proper hearing.²⁹ Behind the scenes, however, his supporters chafed at the cuts. The eminent pianist, spiritualist, and nonconformist intellectual Mariya Yudina came forcefully to Prokofiev’s defense in a letter of protest to Vlasov:

The abridgement of Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev’s *War and Peace* for the performances on the 9th and then the 11th of this month was, to numerous listeners, a grave error. The 9th scene is remarkable in its conception and realization, in its ingenious response to dramaturgical and compositional challenges, in the brilliance of its orchestration, in the profoundness of its individual episodes (Platon Karatayev, the appearance of Napoleon), in its musical ties with the past, in its maximal emotional impact, and in the richness of its patriotic grandeur. It can hardly be considered incidental to the work. How could one raise a hand against the “Burning of Moscow,” which is close to everyone’s heart, celebrated *at last* in all these great days of ours and in all the perfection of Prokofiev’s craft? How could one be in favor of any sort of abridgement at the moment of the opera’s realization, when it had *not previous been seen*, all the more so in the presence of the author, who owing to illness couldn’t in any shape or form protest?

I don’t dare speak for Sergey Sergeyevich—it’s possible that for some reason unbeknownst to me he didn’t protest to you, either in general or in another context—but he didn’t attend the performance on the 9th and on the 11th he was, as you know, sufficiently passive.³⁰

Yudina additionally speculated that the opera had been shortened for pragmatic rather than aesthetic reasons, but noted that the performances occurred

in the festive atmosphere of the postwar holidays, and that no one in the packed hall would be rushing home. "We all hope to hear the entire work as soon as possible," she concluded. "Being sometimes the first, at other times the only, performer of Prokofiev's works, I permit myself to consider my humble opinion important."³¹

The letter went unnoticed amid the avalanche of reviews that followed the June performances. Prokofiev and Mira gathered them all, taking special interest in a review and photo-spread published in *Vechernyaya Moskva*. The author, Georgiy Polyanovsky, lauded the balance in the score between romantic, epic, and patriotic themes: "The line of Natasha and Bolkonsky's love penetrates the entire fabric of the opera," he observed, "but without obscuring the lofty epic sound of the mass scenes, which bear the valor, faithfulness, and patriotism of the Russian people." Polyanovsky complained, however, that the thematic balance was upset by the presence of the narrator: "The idea of using an announcer to explain and connect the scenic action was a total failure. It was neither artistic nor essential; a large part of the text, moreover, could not be made out by the listener." Of the libretto, Polyanovsky quipped: "To leave Tolstoy's words, his aphoristic style, untouched—perhaps this was a tempting idea! But here the composer and the theater still have a lot of work to do."³² In his view, the opera remained very much a work in progress.

Polyanovsky's observations would be echoed by later reviewers. In the August and September 1946 issues of *Sovetskaya muzika*, for example, Anna Khokhlovkina-Zolotarevskaya compared and contrasted *War and Peace* favorably with the Russian operatic classics of the past: Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh and the Maiden Fevroniya*.³³ Like Polyanovsky, Khokhlovkina-Zolotarevskaya praised the interpenetration of the public and private scenes in the opera. She took issue, however, with the wordiness of the libretto and the absence of folklore-derived material in the vocal lines. Prokofiev had anticipated this second concern, but his response to it had proved inadequate. In the run-up to the June 1945 performances, he had inserted a folksong-derived aria into the score titled "The iron breast does not fear severe weather" (*Zheleznyaya grud' ne boitsya surovosti pogod*).³⁴ Sung by Field Marshal Kutuzov in scene 7, "Before the Battle of Borodino," the insertion marked the first phase in the metamorphosis of this character along nationalistic lines.

The response to the June performances was such that Samosud received tentative permission to stage the opera at the Leningrad Maliy Opera Theater (Malegot). He recognized the need for additional changes, but also the need to preserve Prokofiev's original conception of the opera as a two-evening production. His requests, however, threatened to expand *War and Peace* from two parts to three. Mira reports that, on March 3, 1946, she had a long conversation on the subject with Samosud:

Several days ago he had advised Seryozha to include in the "Mitishchi" scene [10] in *War and Peace* the waltz from the second scene, which he calls "magical." Yesterday he became enamored of a new idea: he wanted a new lyric scene written for the second part of the opera, namely the encounter between Natasha and Pierre at Princess Mariya's after the death of Prince Andrey. A lyrical element would thus be added to the second part; moreover, the Natasha-Pierre plotline would be brought to a close. After the conversation with Samosud I read the corresponding pages of the novel aloud to Seryozha. These pages are truly tremendous, but it seemed to me that the Natasha plotline should end with Andrey's death. Otherwise, for the new scene to have a place, a third part will have to be written.³⁵

The opera would expand from eleven to thirteen scenes, but the idea of adding the scene for Natasha and Pierre would be dropped (it would have brought the opera perilously close to Tolstoy's anti-nationalistic epilogue). In the weeks ahead, Samosud further exhorted Prokofiev to drain *War and Peace* of declamation, the foundation of the 1942 draft, and to infuse it with transformative popular genres, the most spectacular of these being a suite of chimeric dances (a common-time polonaise, a mazurka, a waltz, and an écossaise) for a new scene involving a New Year's Eve ball.³⁶ With this new scene, the opera had twelve; one more would be added, detailing Kutuzov's startling decision to sacrifice Moscow in the struggle against Napoleon. This scene, "A Hut in Fili," would prove to be the most nettlesome of the entire opera; indeed, Prokofiev would still be working on it in the last year of his life. The difficulties stemmed from its allegorical significance and the political baggage it accrued over time. The representation of the Field Marshal's

prosecution of the war against Napoleon gradually became a simulacrum of Stalin's prosecution of the war against Hitler.

On or around June 20, 1945, Prokofiev returned with Mira to Ivanovo. (The couple traveled there in Shostakovich's car and stayed temporarily in Shostakovich's cabin.)³⁷ There, after a five-month interruption, Prokofiev returned part-time to composition, beginning work in the mornings on the *War and Peace* revisions, another symphony (his Sixth), and several smaller projects, including a pair of Russian folksong arrangements for a competition organized by Kabalevsky.³⁸ His headaches and nosebleeds persisted; when bedridden, Mira read French and American literature to him (works by Émile Zola, Prosper Mérimée, and Theodore Dreiser). Toward the end of the summer he had rallied to the point where, as Mira explained to her father, "He seldom has headaches, even though he is working intensively. We have agreed that he will take Sundays off. . . . We have completed the libretto of the new scene for the opera and he has already prepared the waltz for Natasha and Andrey."³⁹

The couple planned to remain in Ivanovo through the fall, but a telegram from the Bolshoy Theater abbreviated their plans. It brought the news that the ballet *Cinderella*, an oft-forsaken, oft-postponed work whose conception dates back to 1940, was in rehearsal for a November 1945 premiere. Prokofiev and Mira hurriedly returned to Moscow in October. The history of the ballet, a commission out of sync with the times, is complex, spanning the entire course of the war and bearing witness to the increasing ossification of the Soviet ballet school. That history must now be told in detail.

Cinderella

Following the successful Leningrad production of his ballet *Romeo and Juliet* in 1940, Prokofiev had entered into discussions with the Kirov Theater for a sequel, one that would equal the success of *Romeo and Juliet* while avoiding the political and logistical problems that had long delayed its premiere. The artistic director of the Kirov Theater, Ariy Pazovsky, had just passed on a scenario by Yuriy Slonimsky that was to have used the music of Chaikovsky, the safest of the Russian classics. Slonimsky, a major ballet critic and aesthete, immediately turned to Prokofiev in the hope that he would write the music for his scenario, a paean to love and the onset of spring with more than a passing resemblance to the traditional Snow Maiden (*Snegurochka*) folktale. Ulanova, the Kirov Theater's prima ballerina, had also proposed

this subject to Prokofiev, and had advised Slonimsky to meet with him.⁴⁰ No sooner had he read the scenario, however, than Prokofiev rejected it, admonishing Slonimsky for writing the kind of text that only an amateur composer would set. While dressing him down, Prokofiev offered an insight into the approach he intended to take in his new ballet:

Balletomanes grumble that my *Romeo and Juliet* lacks dances. This is because they are used only to considering galops, polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, and variations as dances. I am not against traditional ballet forms. Don't you think that I know how to compose them? I can. I just don't want to. It's easy to compose in an old-fashioned way. But one has to move forward. And in Chaikovsky's ballets they don't always dance; sometimes they just walk about the stage. Why don't you complain about that? In my ballets, incidentally, everything has to be danced. It has to be and can be.

It's a pity that there isn't a scenario that would allow me to illustrate how to compose waltzes, polkas, variations, and so on in a contemporary way. Your scenario doesn't allow this: it only requires imitating Chaikovsky!⁴¹

These comments are instructive, illustrating a once-unthinkable fidelity to the forms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ballet but also an interest in updating their contents. Prokofiev readily composed in the number format, but sought to retain the unusual—for the time and place—rhythms and chromatic detours that defined his syntax. Both with and against his wishes, *Cinderella* became—in thick Soviet guise—the fourth Chaikovsky ballet.

Prokofiev signed a contract for the ballet with Yevgeniy Radin, the business director of the Kirov Theater, on November 23, 1940 (between the conclusion of work on *The Duenna* and the beginning of work on *War and Peace*). Owing to the “complexity” of the task and the various demands on Prokofiev's time, Radin offered him 20,000 rubles for its successful completion. The fee was approved by the Committee on Arts Affairs.⁴² The first public notice of the ballet came on January, 17, 1941, in the final lines of an article in *Vechernyaya Moskva*. Prokofiev describes his conception of *Cinderella* as a “living Russian maiden with real, rather than fairy-tale experiences.”⁴³ His choice of words suggests knowledge of the 1940 film *The Radiant Path* (*Svetlii put'*), whose title character (Tanya) evolves from an oppressed,

illiterate housekeeper into a super-productive factory worker and recipient of the Order of Lenin; the original title of the film, directed by Viktor Arday, was *Cinderella*.⁴⁴ Prokofiev further comments in the article that the ballet's scenario would be written by the dramatist Nikolay Volkhov—a rather predictable writer he had first met, through Meyerhold, in Kislovodsk.

In his memoirs, and in an article for the Kirov Theater newspaper *Za sovetskoye iskusstvo* (For Soviet Art), Volkhov offers a cheerful account of the ballet's creation, and supplies the striking image of Prokofiev solving technical problems in his head while playing the card game solitaire on the lid of his piano.⁴⁵ His "uncommonly amicable" collaboration with the composer resulted in a text that represented Cinderella as the "young romantic spirit," a "living presentiment" of true love. The Prince, in contrast, exudes "wind and flame"; rejecting courtly etiquette, "he leaps onto the throne like a horseman into the saddle." Comic interpolations included a lampoon of the stand-offish bourgeoisie and staid eighteenth-century court. The gentle fairy-tale world of the Fairy Godmother was filtered, according to Volkhov, through the imagination of a child, while the scenes in which the Prince searches for his beloved "from North to South, East to West" drew from adult adventure tales. The Ugly Stepsisters remain trapped, from beginning to the end of the ballet, in the quotidian realm, tending to their wardrobe and coiffure in blissful ignorance of their failings.⁴⁶

But the genesis of the scenario was more fraught than Volkhov relates. He and Prokofiev clashed over its contents almost from the outset. On December 24, 1940, Prokofiev told the theater that he imagined the ballet less in the French spirit of Charles Perrault than the Russian spirit of Aleksandr Afanasyev, whose version of the traditional Cinderella fairy tale has very dark hues. "I see *Cinderella* as an updated classical ballet with its particular forms, like the *pas d'action*, *grand pas*, and so forth," Prokofiev noted, adding that "insofar as Afanasyev's Cinderella tale relates to the eighteenth century," he would include other classical dances: a minuet, mazurka, and "no less than two or three full-scale waltzes." In a follow-up telegram to the theater dated January 6, 1941, he paradoxically emphasized the "need to create a Russian Cinderella of Elizabethan times."⁴⁷

By the time *Cinderella* reached the stage, the story line had in places been altered beyond recognition. Prokofiev, the actor and director Zavadsky, and the choreographer Vakhtang Chabukiani all contributed to the revision, though Prokofiev seems to have had the final creative word. Volkhov's draft dates from May 15, 1941; Prokofiev's rewrite, which augments the

buffoonery and suppresses the sentimentality of the draft, dates from much later—May 5, 1944—a month before Prokofiev's first summer in Ivanovo.

Comparison of the two versions finds Prokofiev deleting all but the most crucial narrative details. Where Volkhov created a traditional balletic storybook with elaborate descriptions of décor and dress, Prokofiev argued for concision, and for using the group dances, rather than stock-in-trade pantomime, to drive the action forward. There is, for example, a profound difference between the original and revised texts of act 1, scene 5, which depict the Fairy Godmother as a beggar-woman:

VOLKHOV: The domestic situation threatens to become a tempest. But at this time—it is unknown how—a mysterious old woman appears in the room. Did she come through the door? Or straight through the wall? And her gait is such that she seems less to walk than to flow through the room. She appears to be a beggar. She leans on a crutch; a pouch hangs from her shoulder. And since nobody knows that the Fairy Godmother has arrived, they all take her for a beggar. The Fairy Godmother maintains this impression on purpose. With her hand outstretched, she first approaches the stepmother, then [the Ugly Stepsisters] Skinny [Khudishka] and Dumpy [Kubishka]. Nobody, however, gives her anything. Only Cinderella, in a fit of pity, wants to give the old woman something. Cinderella, however, owns nothing except her slippers. Gripped by a feeling of goodness, Cinderella quickly retrieves the cherished slippers from a small chest and offers them to the old woman. The Fairy tenderly looks at Cinderella and, concealing them in her pouch, disappears just as she had appeared.

PROKOFIEV: In the room—it is unknown how—the Fairy Godmother appears in the guise of a beggar woman. She asks for a handout, but nobody gives her one. Cinderella, in a fit of goodness gives the old woman the cherished slippers. The Fairy disappears.⁴⁸

Pantomimic detail was also excised from the ending of act 1, in the prophetic scene between Cinderella, her Fairy Godmother, and the Lilliputian timekeepers that control Cinderella's destiny:

VOLKHOV: The clock face lights up. The arms rise from 8 to 12. One after another, frightened dwarfs run out from the clock case. They don't understand what happened to the clock. But the old woman takes one of the dwarfs by the collar, shakes him and very strictly orders him to warn Cinderella about the arrival of midnight. At midnight the magic spell will disappear. And the princess will be in rags again.

PROKOFIEV: The clock face lights up. The arms move from 8 to 12. One after another, 12 dwarfs run out from the clock case. The old woman orders the dwarfs to warn Cinderella about the arrival of midnight. At midnight the magic spell will disappear.⁴⁹

Although the scenario was drastically shortened between drafts, Prokofiev did permit a few scenes to be expanded. The depiction of each of the Four Seasons (the Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter Fairies), and the insertion of the "Dance of the Grasshoppers and Dragonflies" in act 1 evinces the influence, however remote, of the pantheism of the Snow Maiden folktale. Prokofiev had not altogether forgotten Slonimsky's proposal. Act 3, scene 1, moreover, includes three galops, which show the Prince traveling the globe in search of his beloved; along the way, he encounters temptresses from exotic nations. The Prince intently resists their advances.

On March 29, 1941, Prokofiev told a reporter for *Kurortnaya gazeta* (Resort Gazette) in Sochi that he had completed "half of the music for the ballet. Now I am working on the finale, after which the theater will begin to prepare the spectacle. *Cinderella* is scheduled as the first premiere of the season at the Leningrad Theater of Opera and Ballet."⁵⁰ Prokofiev added that the title role would be danced by Ulanova to choreography by Chabukiani. In 1941, Prokofiev met several times with Chabukiani, declaring in no uncertain terms that he would not permit alterations to his music to suit the choreography, as had been the disappointing case with *Romeo and Juliet*. On one occasion, Volkhov recounts, Prokofiev set a metronome on the lid of the piano and said to Chabukiani: "'Now be good enough to dance through the entire second act. And remember one thing—since I've not yet written the music, you can change as many choreographic patterns as you like. But when I've written it, not a single note may be changed.'" And Chabukiani began to dance and actually danced through the entire second

act.”⁵¹ Following this silent demonstration, the composer drafted the music for act 2, taking care to establish melodic links between it and act 1. (In act 1, the love theme has the task of anticipating, through its harmonic digressions, new experiences; in act 2, the theme documents, through harmonic repetition, the moment of recognition.)

Prokofiev fell slightly behind schedule and requested an extension from the Kirov Theater from April 1 to June 15, 1941. (To show that progress had been made, he forwarded the piano score of act 2 and “1/3” of act 1 to the theater for perusal.)⁵² The outbreak of war in the Soviet Union forced an unexpected, indefinite postponement of the premiere. Prokofiev and Chabukiani ended up together in Tbilisi, but they did not realize their work on the ballet. The music of *Cinderella* remained unfinished until July 1943, after Prokofiev had relocated to Perm. The Kirov troupe had also been evacuated to Perm, its administrators hoping to begin rehearsing the ballet in August, this time with choreography by Konstantin Sergeyev.⁵³ A production was planned for the cramped local theater in December. The conductor Sherman, who had also transferred to Perm, describes the state of affairs:

As soon as he arrived in Perm Prokofiev worked on the ballet *Cinderella*. He composed in the morning, and then stopped by in the afternoon (we were all living in a hotel called “Semietazhka” [Seven Stories]; the sole upright piano in the hotel was in my room) to check what he had composed in the morning. At the piano Prokofiev checked only the complicated polyphonic passages. I was delighted to be the first to hear not only the music of Prokofiev’s *Cinderella* but also that of his Flute Sonata. In 1943 in the hall of the Perm city library Sergey Sergeyevich played several excerpts from *Cinderella* at the piano. In that same concert the Kirov Theater Orchestra under my direction performed his Classical Symphony and his *Overture on Jewish Themes* (the orchestral version had been made by the author in 1936 at the request of the conductor Koussevitzky).⁵⁴

Prokofiev completed the piano score in time for the rehearsals, but the premiere was once again postponed, this time owing to logistical problems. The theater in Perm had neither the means nor the clout to mount a large-scale ballet during the war.

The orchestration was begun in the spring of 1944. As is characteristic of Prokofiev's large scores, there are three systems of two-line notation on each page of the manuscript, with the selection of instruments indicated in shorthand in the margins. (As testament to wartime shortages, the 153-page manuscript of act 2 is written on poor-quality paper of different sizes.)⁵⁵ For acts 1 and 2, Prokofiev had Karpov, with whom he had worked on *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*, assist with the scoring; for act 3, he enlisted Lamm. On February 3, 1944, the Kirov troupe at last began rehearsals. These took place in a makeshift, leaky studio in the House of the Red Army in Perm. Half of the choreography would be set before the troupe returned to Leningrad, where its administrators confronted the daunting challenge of resurrecting its repertoire in deplorable conditions. The premiere of *Cinderella* would follow the return to the stage of an enduring favorite, Chaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, as a symbol of the survival of the city's people and culture through the blockade.⁵⁶

In a March 26 broadcast Prokofiev described his conception of *Cinderella* and the premieres that had been promised (dates uncertain) for Moscow and Leningrad. "The fairy tale about Cinderella is encountered in many nations, many peoples," Prokofiev noted, adding that he and his scenarist "paid close attention to the dramatic side of the ballet." "It was our desire to make the characters real and living so that their sorrows and joys did not leave viewers indifferent." The music, Prokofiev conceded, reflected classical rather than modern ballet tradition. "It has several variations, a pas de deux, an Adagio, 3 waltzes, a gavotte, and a mazurka."⁵⁷ In a November comment, Prokofiev revealed that he had assigned three lyrical themes to the title character, the first designating Cinderella's suffering at the hands of her wicked stepsisters, the second her dreams of a better future, and the third her passion for the Prince.⁵⁸ Volkhov boasts of having given Prokofiev the idea of representing the hours of the clock and the chiming using tap-dancing dwarfs. He also took credit for the paraphrase, in act 2, of the March from Prokofiev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges* in the duet for the Ugly Stepsisters. (The decision to derive Cinderella's love theme from a portion of the incidental music to *Eugene Onegin* was Prokofiev's own.)⁵⁹ Finally, Volkhov seems to have advised Prokofiev to set the act 3, scene 1 episode between the Prince and the Cobblers, one of whom suffers from ill-temper brought on by a toothache.⁶⁰

Prior to the ballet's Moscow premiere, several members of the Committee on Arts Affairs attended a rehearsal to vouchsafe its suitability for the

stage. On November 16, 1945, the group met to discuss the ballet. For the most part, it was praised; the lone complaint concerned the orchestration, which had been changed on the insistence of the conductor, Yuriy Fayer, who decided that it was too light for the Bolshoy Theater. In the spring of 1945, he and the choreographer Rostislav Zakharov had sent Volkhov to the Podlipki sanatorium in Barvikha, where Prokofiev was recuperating from his January collapse, to discuss the orchestration. The composer unhappily agreed to the proposed changes, which were carried out by an in-house musician at the Bolshoy Theater, the percussionist Boris Pogrebov.⁶¹ These did not sit well with the Committee on Arts Affairs. One of the appointed reviewers of the score, Khachaturyan, complained that "in some places the instrumentation is too heavy"; another, Shostakovich, observed that "nothing is said on the billboard about who took part in the orchestration or re-orchestration at the theater. It was well done; nothing shocked me about it. But I was nonetheless surprised that Prokofiev, who is such an outstanding orchestrator, had not completed the orchestration himself."⁶²

In reality, the changes made a travesty of the ballet, since the composer had invested a great deal of energy in creating dreamlike timbres: the strings, for example, perform drawn-out phrases at the extreme limits of their registers. One potential explanation for the alterations to the score comes from Fayer's pupil Gennadiy Rozhdestvensky, who recalled that neither Fayer nor Zakharov felt comfortable reading scores. In the run-up to the premiere, the task of interpreting *Cinderella* fell to the rehearsal pianist, which resulted in a mismatch between the orchestral music and the dance. On one occasion, Rozhdestvensky notes, the choreographer heard the rehearsal pianist playing a forte section of the score and decided, in light of its robustness, to assign it to six men. At the first orchestral rehearsal, however, they found out that "these six men are dancing to a solo flute that just happens to be playing *forte*."⁶³ Sensing a fiasco in the offing, the dancers began protesting. At this point, Rozhdestvensky continues, Pogrebov was summoned to correct the orchestration. "In place of the unfortunate flute he inserted three trumpets in unison and added a large drum which beat the count of '1.' . . . Pogrebov reorchestrated *Cinderella* from A to Z."⁶⁴ (Rozhdestvensky, whose recollections evince a talent for exaggeration, if not an unbridled imagination, is overstating the extent of the alterations by a few letters.) Adding insult to an injury wrought by incompetence, the ballet's Moscow premiere included a scene that Prokofiev had deleted. It depicted the Prince searching for Cinderella after the ball in Africa. The music was adapted by the tunesmith Vladimir

Zakharov from the preexisting “Orientalia” of act 3 and orchestrated by Pogrebov.⁶⁵ In the original scenario, Volkhov scripted the scene as follows:

The third galop brings the Prince to Africa. Some Negresses surround him. They have never before seen a slipper and attempt to wear it on their hands. The Prince unearths the jeweled shoe and returns to his native city.⁶⁶

In the revised scenario, Prokofiev replaced this scene with a “series of brief meetings” between the Prince and potential Cinderellas.⁶⁷ The Bolshoy Theater disregarded his wishes.

Cinderella was first seen on November 21, 1945. The embellished orchestration gave the Moscow premiere a leaden grandeur that distracted from the dancing. Ulanova, for one, blanched at the louder and richer sound of the score; she also disliked the costume that Pyotr Vilyams created for her. (Inspired by a “French porcelain statuette of the eighteenth century,” the outfit made Ulanova look like a cross between a shepherdess and a marquise.)⁶⁸ Prokofiev’s doctors advised him against attending the premiere for fear that the excitement would precipitate a stroke. He defied them, seeing *Cinderella* three successive nights at the Bolshoy Theater, though he only managed to stay for one act each time.

The Leningrad premiere of *Cinderella* (April 8, 1946) brought back the original orchestration. Choreographed by Sergeyev, the production fared well with the critics: the writer for *Trud*, presumably heeding official instruction, applauded the Kirov Theater for respecting Prokofiev’s intentions.⁶⁹ The conductor Boris Khaykin wrote to Prokofiev ahead of the premiere to assure him that the Kirov Theater had not tampered with the score. “I heard from Fayer that for some reason he didn’t use your original score, and that the ballet is being done in Moscow in someone else’s arrangement. I don’t know Fayer’s motives for doing this or what the arrangement contains; I can only say that we adhered strictly to the original score and the orchestra sounds simply marvelous.”⁷⁰ The Leningrad staging, a modest, intimate counter to the excesses of the Moscow staging, came as a relief to the composer.

In the November 29, 1945, edition of *Pravda*, Shostakovich reviewed the Moscow premiere of *Cinderella*. His description is cluttered with vague adjectives and metaphors; it is a typical example of Communist official-speak. “In the production’s visual-narrative development,” Shostakovich comments, the music “creates a tremendous emotional-expressive buildup

that achieves authentic tragedy.” “The music,” he emphasizes, “is symphonic: the composer develops the themes with authentic mastery that brings to light the dramatic force of the production.”⁷¹ To the extent that these remarks can be decoded, they contradict the broader Soviet and non-Soviet consensus about Prokofiev’s score. In the words of the dance critic Arlene Croce, “Prokofiev’s ballet... is not a conventional, sweet storybook romance; it is a brooding, disjointed affair.”⁷²

The central problem with the work is its defiance of fairy-tale logic. Cinderella’s home life is less oppressive than her social life. The Ugly Stepsisters are buffoons, figures of fun who debase themselves alone, and Cinderella does not suffer their taunts. The music for the ball scenes is overscaled, characterized by dense chromaticism and heavy string and brass writing (especially in the Bolshoy Theater version): it does not allow Cinderella to forget her blue Mondays. Socialist aesthetics prohibited the composer from portraying the decadent, bourgeois court as a place of salvation. He avoided the issue by focusing on the clock tolling midnight, which marks the climax of an anxious ballroom sequence. For Cinderella and the Prince, the path to happiness is blocked not by social forces but by seconds and minutes. Having grown up in a debased world, both characters grasp at innocence and purity before mortality overtakes them. One senses here that, for Prokofiev, endlessly pressured by deadlines, paradise is a realm without clocks and chronologies. Croce approaches this point when she discusses the nature images in the scenario:

Cinderella goes to the ball not as a social-climbing imposter but as Rousseau’s naturally good human being in search of a non-brutalizing environment. She doesn’t find it. (The Fairy Godmother should have known better, but she’s naive.) Instead, Cinderella finds another child of nature, the Prince, who, even as she, has miraculously escaped environmental conditioning, and the two of them are united in the starry idealism of a world to come.⁷³

The challenge the two characters face is one of dislocation: they need to find each other. In the absence of paradise, their reunion has to serve as its own reward in its own time. Such, at least, was the opinion of at least two reviewers of the Leningrad premiere of the ballet, who both felt that the staging lacked wonder until act 3.⁷⁴ (The music and décor bore the brunt of the

blame for the preceding glumness.) In the final scene, Cinderella no longer behaves as if she is betrothed to a military man, but to a storybook hero.

The three waltzes embody the essence of the romance. The first two—the “Grand Waltz” and the “Waltz Coda”—dominate act 2. Both are foreshadowed in act 1, especially by the number “Cinderella’s Departure for the Ball,” which is suffused with a combination of hope and fear. The third “Slow Waltz” comes in act 3 before the concluding “Amoroso,” which transports the heroine and hero into a magic garden, the sort of place that had vanished in twentieth-century ballet. In the scenario, Prokofiev noted that the “Amoroso” would begin with a “broad melody, calm at first,” followed by “an exposition, then something of an abatement, and then the first melody once again, like a triumphant love song.”⁷⁵ He might have added that the happy ending unfolds in a soundscape reminiscent of *Swan Lake*.

The Grand Waltz is cast as an ABACA rondo, with the B and C sections subdividing into small ternary forms. These inner episodes offer a modest, intimate contrast to the violent outer episodes, which in turn suggest a contrast between the private and public, innocence and experience. The strings introduce grand melodies, but these are compromised, upon repetition, by oboes and muted trumpets, adding a grotesque, Gogolian lining to the waltz. Cinderella and the Prince appear to be caught in a realm that is out of sorts with itself: the downbeats are overstressed by the percussion and brass; intervals of the fourth and fifth are expanded and contracted by semitones; E and B tonic and dominant pitches are undercut by D-sharps and A-sharps. The E-flat major episode at rehearsal 217 alternates between semitonal turn figures and large intervallic leaps. The hairpin dynamics and the divided string chords at rehearsal number 220 and the twinkling arpeggios in the harp and piano at rehearsal 222 generate a phantasmal ambiance, but the interlude ends at rehearsal 225 with the oppressive incursion of the full orchestra and the opening melody: for Cinderella and the Prince the escape into the world of fantasy, the world of art, is short-lived: the waltz sighs to a close with a solo clarinet drifting down three octaves.

The Slow Waltz, a three-part structure depicting the reunion of Cinderella and the Prince, intimates that the two characters have gone to sleep. Prokofiev creates a sense of serene stasis in the opening and closing sections. The opening D-flat major theme unfolds at a leaden tempo (fifty-four beats per minute). Though it contains two-measure subdivisions, the contrapuntal interweaving of the inner lines renders them indistinct. Prokofiev holds pitches over

bar-lines and, by postponing the cadential resolution, increases the theme's duration from eight to ten measures. The temporal distortions are exacerbated by changes in texture: the theme floats back and forth between muted strings and woodwinds. The middle (B) section shatters the calm mood, with the strings and brasses introducing machine-like ostinato patterns and hemiolas. It is not that dancers cannot perform this waltz, but that the waltz cannot perform itself—as witnessed by the insertion of a measure of 4/4 time between rehearsal numbers 376 and 377. Cinderella and the Prince have entered nirvana, but they still sense the regular world. According to the scenario, the middle section of the waltz expresses the reactions of the Ugly Stepsisters to Cinderella's newfound happiness. These reactions, however, are presented in fragments, the oneiric detritus of actual events. The closing section of the waltz reprises the opening theme, but Prokofiev pushes it toward abstraction by distributing it over several octaves.

The Waltz Coda, which occurs between the Grand and Slow Waltzes, is fretful rather than euphoric, with the languid first theme overpowered by the accompaniment and then transformed, upon its repetition, into a restless shadow of itself. The waltz moves from G minor to D major to G major, with the strident second theme, introduced by the glockenspiel and upper brass, sparring with the first theme. Toward the conclusion, the waltz takes a portentous turn, with the dancers overcome, as it were, by an extended orchestral crescendo. The tolling of midnight is nigh, and Cinderella and the Prince cannot avoid it. The ball becomes a modernist nightmare controlled by clockwork automata. Woodblock ticktocks are interpolated by orchestral references to the March of the grotesque gnome Chernomor in Glinka's 1842 opera *Ruslan and Lyudmila*—Prokofiev mimics the piercing piccolo notes of the March with a shrill flute line—and blends it with a chortling brass ostinato borrowed from the Constructivist ballet *Le Pas d'Acier*. High society imperils the heroine and hero, as does the inexorable progression of time. Act 3 finds the two characters stepping into a nostalgic cosmos where love stays pure, unsullied by experience. The tenuousness of this vision is denoted by its brevity: the concluding Amoroso, a digression in the narrative, lasts for just thirty-eight measures.

The more nuanced, less workaday reviews of the ballet focused on its wistfulness. Such is the case of the review in the illustrated journal *Ogonyok* (The Little Flame) by Yuriy Olesha, a gifted prose writer who had to ply his trade as a journalist because he had fallen out of favor with the regime. (Olesha is credited with penning the first proletarian fairy tale: *Three Fat*

Men [*Tri Tolstyaka*, 1924], which served as the basis of a ballet staged at the Bolshoy Theater in the infamous year of 1936.) “At times it seems that one is less listening to a ballet than a tender reminiscence of a ballet,” Olesha wrote of *Cinderella*, “everything is graceful, nothing stressed.” The music, he added, “does not seem to be the product of preparatory work; it comes into being in the moment, a narrative by the composer about how, in his opinion, a fairy tale should sound.”⁷⁶

Olesha seems to be conjuring up the intended rather than the realized ballet. Prokofiev wanted the music to sound increasingly spontaneous, but the alterations to the orchestration for the Bolshoy Theater premiere encumbered it, leaving *Cinderella* trapped in a doubly troubled world. To praise the ballet for its “realism,” as a writer for *Sovetskaya muzika* did, was actually to isolate its crucial defect.⁷⁷ In advance of the Kirov Theater premiere, Prokofiev responded to the problems with the orchestration by extracting three untampered orchestral suites from the ballet. He began planning the suites early in 1946 and continued working on them through the spring. None of them, however, would be published during his lifetime.⁷⁸

Nikolina Gora

Also in early 1946, Prokofiev and Mira abandoned the apartment on Mozhayskoye Shosse for her parents' apartment (the third room of the three-room communal dwelling had evidently become available), which was a short walk from the major theaters and concert halls of the city.⁷⁹ March 8 witnessed the successful Moscow Conservatory premiere of the Third Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*, a reminder of that ballet's staying power in the repertoire. At the end of April Prokofiev and Mira relocated to Nikolina Gora, spending time with friends and acquaintances while also arranging the rental of a dacha from the physicist Mikhaíl Leontovich. Prokofiev's health made travel by public transit between Moscow and Nikolina Gora impractical, if not impossible. Mira's father used his privileges as director of the Institute of Economics to obtain a car, an Opel manufactured in Russian-occupied Leipzig, for Prokofiev's use.⁸⁰ An institute employee, Vladimir Tabernakulov, was tapped to serve as the composer's driver and courier.

On June 2, Prokofiev and Mira traveled to Leningrad with her parents for the staging of *War and Peace* Part I at Malegot. The four of them checked into adjacent rooms at the European Hotel, close to the theater. Prokofiev attended three dress rehearsals, after which he suffered a

debilitating headache that necessitated his return to Moscow; the planned trip of eight days lasted just four.⁸¹ What he heard of the opera satisfied him, even though in his absence Samosud and the singer Sergey Kazbanov had inserted, amid the waltz strains of scene 2, a conversation between Andrey and Natasha that Prokofiev had not actually composed. That addition, which Samosud claimed was inspired by the ballroom episodes in Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* and Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*, prompted yet another: a reprise, at the end of scene 2, of the portentous waltz music heard during the added conversation. The episode thus evolved, in the conductor's conception, from an unstructured divertissement into a fixed dramaturgical whole, the depiction of aristocratic decadence now wrapped around the foretelling of individual destinies. Although Prokofiev sanctioned the changes, he initially found them startling. Over the course of time, and sometimes without his knowledge, his opera had become a collective effort, subject to manipulation by other hands and further and further oriented toward nineteenth-century prototypes. During a rehearsal of scene 2, for example, he apparently "leapt from his chair as though stunned, grasped at the air, stood there dumbfounded, sank back down and . . . when the applause rang out, began clapping with everyone else."⁸² His reaction was equivocal, but the reviews of the June 12 premiere were positive and the production destined for an unprecedented run of 105 performances during the 1946-47 season.⁸³ Prokofiev left Leningrad on June 6 with the expectation that *War and Peace* Part II would soon be staged, bringing his multi-year labor on the opera to a gratifying close.

As his political standing strengthened, so did his finances. On June 27, 1946, Prokofiev learned that he had been awarded a Stalin Prize (First Class) for *Cinderella*, which helped to ensure that the war-torn, mangled ballet remained in the repertoire for the rest of his life. The award came with a 100,000-ruble honorarium, money that greatly assisted with the purchase of a Nikolina Gora dacha, specifically the former residence of the Bolshoy Theater soprano Valeriya Barsova (Vladimirova), who moved for her retirement to Sochi. Prokofiev had long had his eye on the property, having rented a room from Barsova before the war, and quickly moved to purchase it. In a letter dated June 8, 1946, Prokofiev requested additional financing from the Presidium of the Orgkomitet of the Union of Soviet Composers, explaining that "owing to the poor state of my health and the doctors' insistence on the need for me to live permanently outside of the city, I have resolved to acquire Barsova's dacha in Nikolina Gora. The cost is 350,000

rubles, of which I will pay 200,000 rubles myself. I am requesting a loan of 150,000 rubles, which I will repay within two years.”⁸⁴ The unquestioning nature of the letter betrays that the loan had been preapproved, worked out in advance between Prokofiev and Atovmyan. Mira almost confirms this point, noting that Prokofiev at first dismissed the idea of purchasing the dacha because they did not have “even a microscopic part of the sum in the bank.” (Given the composer’s pledge to cover two thirds of the dacha’s purchase price himself, this claim would seem to be false.) To her “amazement,” however, Prokofiev asked Atovmyan for a personal favor, an interest-free loan of 150,000 rubles. “Barsova’s intentions came as no surprise to Atovmyan,” she continues. “He already knew about them and said that, although Muzfond was arranging to acquire the dacha, if Seryozha needed it for health reasons he would try to help.” Atovmyan and his assistant Boris Arkanov arranged the loan for Prokofiev through the Union of Soviet Composers and Muzfond; they also tended to the negotiations with Barsova’s tightfisted husband.⁸⁵ By July 1, the papers were signed, a Steinway upright leased from Muzfond, a divan collected from the Mozhayskoye Shosse apartment, clothing gathered from Prokofiev and Mira’s summer rental in Nikolina Gora, and the move completed. (Mira’s father and ailing mother lived with them for the first several weeks.)

So settled in the countryside, Prokofiev resisted the tumult of Moscow, electing to commute to and from the capital rather than spending extended periods of time there. The house required serious attention—the interior and exterior had to be painted, the large porch enclosed in glass, and the neglected yard and garden cleared—but it was a place of comfort from the start, with an adopted cat (Mendoza) and rooster (Pyotr Ilyich) taking the place of the dog (Zmeyka) that had been his tagalong companion in Ivanovo. During the summer, leading artists populated the region, their abodes serving, like Prokofiev’s, as focal points of creative exchange.

The social novelty of the summer was a July 14 interview, arranged through VOKS, between the renowned American radio broadcaster Norman Corwin and Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, and Lamm. Corwin had left the United States on June 15 to assemble a series of broadcasts on the state of the postwar world. (He received financial backing for the excursion from the Wendell Willkie Foundation, which gave him the inaugural One World Award in recognition of his wartime broadcasting.) Corwin had placed Prokofiev at the top of his list of people he hoped to interview, but no sooner had permission been granted for the meeting and the journey to Nikolina

Gora arranged than he came down with a bad case of strep throat.⁸⁶ His production engineer, Lee Bland, took his place, traveling to the dacha with a portable magnetic wire recorder for an English-language question-and-answer session on cultural and political matters. Since neither Myaskovsky nor Lamm spoke any English, Grigoriy Shneyerson, the VOKS official who oversaw the interview, acted as their interpreter. Lamm spoke to Bland about his work on Musorgsky's operas, and Myaskovsky offered his views on the American music scene. Prokofiev, according to Shneyerson, offered laconic responses to questions regarding "general political problems" and "contemporary art and literature."⁸⁷ Bland recalled the interview as follows:

Prokofiev—very amiable and gracious, spoke excellent English. Checked gray tweed suit. Wonderful sense of humor. A regular guy, very relaxed. Hopeful for world peace. Believes cultural exchange of music and musicians important.

Myaskovsky—graying beard, warm smile, twinkling eyes; black striped trousers, rather motley white jacket, wristwatch, cap. Shares Sergey's views on peace, exchange.

Lamm—baldish, crew-cut style; snaggle-toothed, black high-necked shirt and belted velveteen jacket. Less outgoing, more introspective than others.

My recollection of the dacha is that it was pleasant and comfortable, with plain and simple furnishings, badly in need of painting and had a tin roof. The house was nestled among tall pines and had a profusion of green shrubbery which lent privacy.

Mrs. Prokofiev (his second wife, I presume) was dark, petite, attractive but shy, though she did pose with us afterward for outside pictures and provided a spread of cognac, wines, pork, candy and cakes before we parted.

It was a fun visit with happy people, casual and spiced with good humor—a Sunday gathering of close friends who accepted me with warmth and cordiality and were seemingly unperturbed by my microphone or wire recorder.⁸⁸

In fact, the photographs of the interview taken by the VOKS photographer Yevgeniy Umnov indicate that Bland's magnetic wire recorder surprised and delighted Prokofiev. Also contrary to Bland's recollections, Prokofiev's

English on the recording is less than excellent. He speaks for just two minutes during the interview broadcast on February 11, 1947, on CBS Radio, commenting that he neither composed moribund music ("I'm not doing myself reactionary art") nor had faced State censorship ("Nobody orders me anything, so I'm writing what I want"). Eisenstein and the *Pravda* editor David Zaslavsky are also featured in Corwin's broadcast, and provide similarly brief comments.⁸⁹

Bland encountered a typical scene at Nikolina Gora: most days, Prokofiev, Lamm, and Myaskovsky met over tea, though by other accounts they did not discuss prospects for world peace. They coveted the relative isolation and sameness of their days, resisting, for example, having telephones installed in their dachas. Atovmian, meanwhile, reliably tended to Prokofiev's Moscow affairs. Lavrovsky visited to discuss other potential ballets, and Kabalevsky proposed a reworking of *Semyon Kotko*, but for the most part, Prokofiev was able to devote the summer to "writing what I want." His unstable health constantly reminded him of his mortality, to which he responded by pursuing autobiographical writings.⁹⁰ He began to contemplate his legacy, bringing forsaken scores to efficient completion and putting the outlines and sketches associated with them in order. There was nothing morbid about the pursuit; it was a bid for posthumous longevity.

Puffing cigarettes at his desk—a habit that surely kept his blood pressure up—Prokofiev applied coats of polish to several chamber and orchestral scores, simultaneous commissions with private and public dimensions. His task list was such that he found himself obliged to abandon a large-scale project that, like *Cinderella*, languished for several years. The project in question, bearing the working title *Khan Buzay*, and the working subtitle "But the Shah has Horns!" (A u shakha yest' roga!), was a folktale-derived comic opera in the Eastern mode. Prokofiev had conceived it for the Alma-Ata Opera and Ballet Theater in 1942 and intended to base the brief score, in accord with the requirements of the commission, on regional folk music—forsaking, in effect, the type of *couleur locale* stylizations evident in *Semyon Kotko* in favor of direct quotation. Mira was commissioned to write the libretto, which, as she put it in a July 4, 1943, letter to a friend, obliged her to immerse herself in "Kazakh literature—fairy tales, legends, epics." Prokofiev, she added, had long been drawn to the "novelty and beauty" of Kazakh folk music.⁹¹ The cause of the attraction dated back to an elaborate 1925 collection of Kirghiz and Kazakh melodies assembled by the composer and ethnographer Aleksandr Zatayevich, to whom Prokofiev was introduced in Leningrad on January 26,

1927, during his first visit to the Soviet Union. On that occasion, Zatajevich presented Prokofiev with an autographed copy of the collection; when it was reprinted in an expanded format in 1934, he gave the composer another signed copy. During preparatory work on *Khan Buzay*, Prokofiev systematically categorized the melodies in the collection according to their character and ritualistic use. He was aided by an essay published in the August–September 1939 issue of the journal *Literature and Art of Kazakhstan* (*Literatura i iskusstvo Kazakhstana*).⁹² Ninety-nine of the melodies fell into the category of “calm lyricism” with a subgroup of twelve targeted for eventual inclusion in the opera. Other categories included “sad” and “anxious” melodies, “slow” and “fast” dances, “broad” melodies, laments, and marches. Some of the melodies lacked distinction: Prokofiev assigned this “objective” music to a category called “the main part,” intending, perhaps, to include it in the background scoring rather than the vocal lines.⁹³

The marvelously incongruous plot involves a superstitious Khan possessing a pair of horns that, as he despotically rhapsodizes to his captives, provide him with courage, wisdom, and control over the people. The people in question include the beguiling maiden Ayzhan and the gullible, Figaro-like barber, Dzhuman, to whom Ayzhan is betrothed. From time to time the Khan needs a haircut, but those who accept the honor of the task are invariably executed when they discover, beneath his turban, the grotesque horns. Dzhuman becomes the latest chosen victim (a jealous rival for Ayzhan’s hand recommends him, through his treacherous father, to the Khan). Once the trimming and brushing is completed the Khan, true to form, sentences Dzhuman to death at the hands of his deaf-and-dumb henchman. Things begin to unravel for the Khan, however, when he discovers Ayzhan lurking in the corridors of the palace and, intoxicated by her looks, begins to flirt with her. Preternaturally fearful that Ayzhan might inform his wife of his indiscretion, he blanches when he hears from the now-captive Dzhuman that Ayzhan has arranged to meet with her for that very purpose. The second of three acts ends with the Khan granting Dzhuman a one-day stay of execution on the promise that he will prevent the meeting from occurring. The final act elevates the folklore-based slapstick into Orphic mystery. Dzhuman whispers the Khan’s secret into a wishing well (he has vowed not to speak of it to anything that walks, crawls, or flies, but cannot resist uttering it into the enchanted waters); Ayzhan fashions a magical lute (as opposed to a magical flute or pipes) out of a reed taken from the well, and the lute, accordingly, begins to play the tune of a song with the words “but the Shah has horns!” Obsessed with Ayzhan,

the Khan fantasizes about her replication into an entire harem of beauties. The plot reaches a climax with the arrival at the palace of the Khan's sensible wife: she, Ayzhan, and Dzhuman manage to convince the Khan that the Shaytan, the Devil of Muslim theology, has come to punish him for his misdeeds. He trembles in terror as Dzhuman, disguised as the Shaytan, cuts off his horns. "My friends," Dzhuman giddily announces to the gathered villagers, "the secret for which our barbers perished is no more. Khan Buzay grew horns, and he decided that they were a sign of his greatness, power, and gave him the right to oppress our people. He likened himself to Alexander Makedonski [Alexander the Great], and he compared himself with Eskender [Emperor of Ethiopia]—but what happened to him was just what happened to the sparrow."⁹⁴ Dzhuman thereafter recites the fable of the sparrow who thought he was an eagle, and ends up fatally snagged in the wool of a sheep he imagined he could whisk away, just like the eagle had before him. A mock sigh of pity for the Khan, and the commencement of Dzhuman and Ayzhan's wedding celebrations, bring down the curtain.

The surviving musical sketches (forty-nine two-sided pages) find Prokofiev enlivening the farce with musical double entendres; these reinforce the master-slave dialectic at the core of the plot.⁹⁵ In act 2, the triumphant march associated with Dzhuman's entrance into the palace becomes a despondent shuffle to the scaffold; the theme of his expected reward for serving the Khan becomes the dirge of his unexpected punishment. Here Prokofiev exploited the potential for European listeners to misperceive the major-mode affects of Kirghiz and Kazakh laments as jubilations. In acts 1 and 3, the minor-mode music associated with the Khan's supposed munificence blends with the music for his subjects' deprivations; the leitmotif of his secret becomes the leitmotif of its revelation. Falsetto and false chromatic relations would have underscored the Khan's self-delusions. The uniqueness of the planned score, however, resides as much in its structure as its syntax. As a consequence of his work with the filmmakers Eisenstein, Fayntsimmer, Romm, and Room, Prokofiev conceived *Khan Buzay* as a "cinematic" opera, the three acts partitioned into "shots" (*kadri*) of sometimes less than a minute in length, the static nature of their internal contents compensated for by their transience.⁹⁶ Before suspending work on the score, he had assigned twenty-two of these shots to act 1 and twenty-seven to act 2. Despite being conceived for a modest regional theater, *Khan Buzay* compelled Prokofiev to rethink his approach to opera on a grand scale. Whereas in *The Gambler*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, *The Fiery Angel*, and *Semyon Kotko* he had

consciously replaced the number format with through-composition, here he replaced through-composition with cinematic vignettes. In *Khan Buzay*, dramaturgical thesis and antithesis reached a synthesis.

Most of the work on the libretto (Mira's task) and sketches took place in Perm in September 1943, the impossible aim (given Prokofiev's other projects) being to complete the piano score by September 15 and the orchestral score by November 1—the terms of the 28,000-ruble commission.⁹⁷ He set aside the opera upon traveling to Moscow to participate in the Soviet anthem competition, and did not return to it until the summer of 1946. Beyond, however, putting the sketches in order and having Mira type up the libretto, Prokofiev did little actual work on *Khan Buzay*; by August 23, he had permanently abandoned it. He waited until April 16, 1947, however, to file an official notice of the termination, informing the Committee on Arts Affairs on that day of his willingness to return the advance payment for the opera.⁹⁸

Prokofiev shelved the opera in favor of his Violin Sonata in F Minor, which he had begun in 1938 but, as he confessed to Myaskovsky in a June 12, 1943, letter, he had found “difficult” to pursue.⁹⁹ The dark mood of the work cannot be explained by the sources, although the political climate of the 1930s could be one cause.

The first of its four movements features accented seventh chords in the piano and fleet, muted runs in the violin marked *freddo*, the latter likened by the composer to “autumn evening wind blowing across a neglected cemetery grave.”¹⁰⁰ The spine-tingling return of that morbid breeze at the end of the fourth movement—indebted to the finale of Chopin's Piano Sonata no. 3 in B Minor—haunts the whole. Yet Prokofiev exerts strict control over the syntax and formal layout: at no point does the chilling sound threaten to destabilize or de-energize the score. For all its darkness, the Violin Sonata does not succumb to bleak midwinter.

Its completion was hastened by its dedicatee, the violinist David Oistrakh, for whom Prokofiev had earlier, in 1943 and 1944, transcribed his Flute Sonata. Prokofiev invited Oistrakh and his preferred accompanist, Lev Oborin, to the dacha to familiarize them with the rough draft of the Violin Sonata. Oistrakh recalls the composer describing the character and structure of each of the four movements before playing them without pause at the piano. His technique had slipped, but the effect produced by his hesitant, nervous performance was profound.¹⁰¹

Oistrakh and Oborin premiered the Violin Sonata on October 23, 1946, at the Moscow Conservatory, on the second half of a program that included

Shostakovich's Piano Trio in E Minor. Prokofiev heard the follow-up performance on October 25 before an audience that included members of the Stalin Prize Committee, who would, in the coming months, judge it an exceptional achievement, the "pride of Soviet music."¹⁰² The composer's apprehension was nonetheless palpable, as was his relief that the performance succeeded. Upon congratulating the performers and engaging in amiable post-concert chatter with colleagues ("I don't like prescribing overdoses," Gavriil Popov enthused, "but the sonata is truly brilliant"), Prokofiev returned with Mira to Nikolina Gora.¹⁰³ The impressions of the evening kept him awake through the middle of the night.

His impressions were not, however, entirely positive. Irrespective of the official praise heaped on the Violin Sonata in *Pravda*—the reviewer was directed to interpret the score as a "meditation on the fortunes of the Motherland"—Oistrakh and Oborin's performance had disappointed him.¹⁰⁴ He griped that they had played the second and fourth movements dispassionately, "like two old professors," an approach he sought to correct by inviting them for a coaching session on November 18 at the Moscow apartment.¹⁰⁵ The score, which would not be published until 1951, remained a work in progress, with Prokofiev adding more accents and dynamic markings in an effort to prevent Oistrakh and Oborin's interpretation from becoming standardized. He even contemplated rewriting the second movement. In a sense, the Violin Sonata, an often desolate-sounding work, would not be realized until 1953, when Oistrakh played the first and third movements at the composer's funeral.

Cuts and Additions

Work on the Violin Sonata had taken a physical toll as the fall of 1946 approached. A spike in Prokofiev's blood pressure prevented him from traveling to Leningrad for the rehearsals, preview, and delayed world premiere of *The Duenna* at the Kirov Theater. The production was almost single-handedly mounted by the conductor Khaykin and director Ilya Shlepyanov under conditions that were, as Mira understated, "not entirely favorable."¹⁰⁶ *The Duenna* barely made it to the stage, owing to a harsh assessment from Glavrepertkom. "I won't describe in detail all of the upheavals to you," Khaykin meekly wrote to Prokofiev, "I'll just say that the Leningrad commission, having at first approved *The Duenna* and our performance, became scared and didn't know how to escape the predicament. In the end they

simply decided to ban the performance."¹⁰⁷ The complaints ostensibly centered on the emphasis on declamation, the prominence of church figures, and the perceived emotional disconnect between the music and the text; behind the scenes, however, Glavrepertkom was reacting to a pair of Central Committee resolutions from August 14 and 26, 1946, the first concerned with the harmful, "anti-Soviet" content of the Leningrad literary journals *Zvezda* (Star) and *Leningrad*, and the second condemning the perceived overemphasis on foreign-authored plays on Leningrad stages.¹⁰⁸ *The Duenna*, a benignly foreign-themed opera, became a victim of an ideological cleanup operation. In despair, Khaykin appealed to the Committee on Arts Affairs for support; Khrapchenko decided to allow the opera to be shown to the public on November 3, 1946, but without advance notice in the press or even advertisements. The decision to permit subsequent performances stemmed from the positive reaction to the production by Yuriy Kalashnikov, the head of the theatrical division of Glavrepertkom. Posters and advertisements appeared thereafter, and the opera was re-premiered on November 9, with subsequent performances arranged for November 21 and 27.

Had he attended these performances, Prokofiev would doubtless have protested the cuts and modifications to his score. Khaykin blamed the changes on Glavrepertkom and the fallout from the October 26 dress rehearsal of the opera, but he simultaneously defended their merits. He was caught in a bind, neither wishing to offend Prokofiev nor, for obvious reasons, to risk the ire of the officials who oversaw his conduct. Khaykin assured Prokofiev that tableau 1 of *The Duenna* survived the adjudication relatively unharmed, save for the elimination of the eerie slow dance from scene 6 which, according to Khaykin, disrupted the flow of the action—even though this was its structural purpose. The duet between Louisa and the duenna at the start of tableau 2 merely lost a repeat, but the role of Clara's maid Rosina in tableau 3 disappeared altogether. Tableau 6, depicting Jerome's comically unsuccessful rehearsal of his amateur quartet, was shortened by four minutes—again to maintain a rapid dramatic pulse. These changes paled, however, when compared to the "two terrible blows" that befell the opera. Khaykin explained:

First, the opera's seventh tableau (the convent) was entirely omitted. It was rehearsed until the last minute, and not badly. Part of it came out very well, and the music is simply magnificent. But it is too drawn out and the musical syntax departs, it seems to me, from the overall style of the opera.

Most of our actors and musicians applauded the decision to remove this scene, saying that it helped the opera. I'm also confident it helps. The second blow is less important. In tableau 8, that is, the monastery, the carousing before the entrance of Mendoza and Antonio was significantly cut, almost in half. In general, the monks' revelry had to be significantly tempered, a great shame.¹⁰⁹

Concluding his nightmarish summary, Khaykin mentions an unspecified "incidental" cut to the finale of tableau 9. There follows a feeble attempt to reassure Prokofiev about the success of certain scenes with the public (the maskers' dances, the monks' antics, and the finale, in which Jerome accompanies himself by tinkling perfectly pitched duralumin goblets). Banalities about audience laughter and applause could not, however, conceal that the production deviated from Prokofiev's half-operatic, half-balletic conception. Khaykin's explanation for this violation is equivocal: the slapdash changes, he coarsely suggests, improved the comedy—albeit at the unmentioned expense of the opera's dreamscapes.

The Duenna was at least staged; *War and Peace* Part II was not, and here Prokofiev confronted demands for changes of a different magnitude, demands that both frustrated and challenged him. Reviewing the score with the composer in the fall of 1946, Samosud complained that the battle scenes lacked an expository crux, an episode in which "the course of the war is settled." For over a year, he had been advocating the insertion of a new scene extracted from volume 1, part 3, chapter 12 of Tolstoy's sprawling novel, which concerns Russian battle planning. Prokofiev, ever-fearful of dramatic stasis, balked: "A council?... A war council?... In an opera?!" Such a scene, the composer recognized, could hardly be partitioned into fast-paced, cinematic vignettes. Beyond stasis, the greater problem concerned the depiction of Kutuzov. Tolstoy represents the Field Marshal as humble, devout, obese, and, in terms of wartime planning, rather limited; he is also down to earth with his soldiers and refreshingly foul-mouthed. He is a transcendentalist, committed, like Prince Andrey and Pierre, to something greater than himself, to an interconnected cosmos. In this regard he constitutes the antipode of the self-assured, vainglorious Napoleon. The Stalinist recoding of the novel required a different Kutuzov, a nineteenth-century simulacrum of Stalin himself, whose heroic persona (pipe in mouth and eyes twinkling at some distant horizon) would be projected in an epic aria, one that altogether lacked the concreteness and

grotesqueness of the original character. Prokofiev conceded that, to win the war with Glavrepertkom, such an aria would need to be composed, however much it violated Tolstoy's conception of Kutuzov and, with it, his conception of historical movement. Prokofiev's discussions with Samosud about the style and shape of the aria became heated, however, with the impatient composer grouching "Just what do you want?" and "I can't write like that" to the patient conductor as one inadequate draft followed another. After eight attempts to compose something original, Prokofiev resorted to recycling, offering Samosud a number whose melody largely derived from the "Tatar Steppe" choral march of *Ivan the Terrible* Part I. The text for the aria was also recycled, but this time from within *War and Peace* itself. In the new scene 10, "A Hut in Fili," Kutuzov sings the words of the Chorus of Muscovites in the old scene 10, "A Street in French-Occupied Moscow."¹¹⁰

The already robust opera (or, as Prokofiev joked to Alpers, "operetta") had now expanded to thirteen scenes.¹¹¹ Prokofiev entertained the faint hope that Part II would be staged at Malegot in the spring of 1947 but, in the absence of an official assessment of the new scene, he recognized that the earliest possible staging would be the fall. The July 20, 1947, closed-door dress rehearsal of scenes 9 to 13 of Part II proved disastrous, however, leaving Samosud to break the news to Prokofiev, who was not in attendance, that the score, which had been well prepared for the hearing, needed additional work. Mira reports that, in August, Samosud and Vasilii Kukharsky, the deputy director of the theater administration division of the Committee on Arts Affairs, traveled to Nikolina Gora to update Prokofiev on the difficulties with the rehearsals. Mira confines her recollections to the fact that Samosud and Kukharsky "requested small changes to the 'Fili' and 'Moscow' scenes" of the opera so as "to strengthen the theme of the Muscovite opposition" to Napoleon's forces. Prokofiev, she adds, agreed to make the changes.¹¹² These proved insufficient; when Part II was auditioned again three months later, Prokofiev's ideologically unmediated transposition of Tolstoy was condemned. Scenes 9 and 11 (representing Napoleon and Shevardino Redoubt and the burning of Moscow, respectively), were effectively banned, which ruled out a 1947 staging of Part II. Official attitudes toward opera, Prokofiev grimly realized, were hardening.

The impact on the composer of the truncated premiere production of *The Duenna* was minor; the problems with *War and Peace*, in contrast, would have a deleterious effect on his self-confidence. Despite his effort to monumentalize the opera, to bring its sound into accord with that of his orchestral

works from the period, he had failed, according to his assessors, to represent the larger historical truths of the Russian historical progress toward Communism. Prokofiev worked at the problem but, owing to a downturn in political and cultural conditions, no solution could be found. At the end of 1947, pessimism breached optimism.

Public to Private

Yet 1947 had begun optimistically. In the first weeks, Prokofiev's health was stable, allowing him to attend several performances of *Cinderella* and the premiere of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Bolshoy Theater.¹¹³ His business dealings with Atovmyan continued to benefit his career: in the realm of chamber and orchestral music, he usually chose what he wanted to compose, and Atovmyan obligingly prepared the contract in advance, sometimes exceeding Union of Soviet Composers rates for the genre of the work in question, a blatant conflict of interest. The negotiation for the Flute Sonata offers a typical example: the first draft of the contract, prepared by Orgkomitet employees in the early spring of 1943, specified a payment of 4,000 rubles. Upon reviewing the draft, Atovmyan informed Prokofiev that "no less than 6,000 rubles should be paid for a sonata at this time. I changed the amount to 8,000 rubles."¹¹⁴ The capriciousness of his book-keeping did not come under suspicion until the end of 1947, when he became the terrified focus of a series of State audits. In the meantime, Prokofiev remained the principal beneficiary of Atovmyan's largesse, securing in 1946 the funds for the purchase of the dacha, and increasing in 1947 the amount of support he provided to Lina and their two sons. The Committee on Arts Affairs was also generous to him, requesting eight large-scale works on patriotic subjects, all involving conventional forms and heavy orchestration. These commissions, facilitated by Shlifshteyn rather than Atovmyan (whose jurisdiction was the Union of Soviet Composers and Muzfond, not the Committee on Arts Affairs), contributed an additional 60,000 rubles to his income.

The period was also graced with a number of official tributes unexampled and unequaled in the annals of Soviet music. On June 7, 1947, Prokofiev learned that he had won a First Class Stalin Prize for his Violin Sonata. Other such awards were bestowed on the performers involved in the 1947 productions of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Bolshoy Theater and *War and Peace* Part I at Malegot. The 1946 Kirov Theater production of *Cinderella* had likewise

received a First Class Stalin Prize. On November 5, 1947, Prokofiev would be elevated from the official status of Merited Activist of the Arts (*Zasluzhenniy deyatel' iskusstv*) of the RSFSR, a title given to him in 1944, to People's Artist (*Narodniy artist*) of the RSFSR. These prestigious titles outshone the Order of the Red Banner of Labor that he had received from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in the summer of 1943,¹¹⁵ and the two medals he had earned for his service “in defense of the Caucasus” (*za oboronu Kavkaza*) and “valiant labor in the Great Patriotic War” (*za doblestniy trud v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne*). In 1947, he also earned a medal in connection with Moscow's 800th birthday celebrations, a widely distributed award that did not come with prize money.¹¹⁶ The period of what the music critic Aleksey Ogolevets called the “inexplicable overlooking” of Prokofiev's “creative service” had clearly ended.¹¹⁷

According to a VOKS summary from the period, Prokofiev's foreign distinctions included a membership in the Boston Musical Academy, the honorary chairmanships of two Prokofiev societies in the United States, and a gold medal from the Royal Philharmonic Society in London.¹¹⁸ A VOKS memorandum to the Central Committee Propaganda and Agitation Department (*Upravleniye Propagandi i Agitatsii*) dated July 27, 1947, similarly confirms Prokofiev's selection as an honorary member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music; an inscription on the memorandum allows for notice of the selection to be printed in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*.¹¹⁹ In 1947, Prokofiev did not require Central Committee permission to accept the foreign award; the same could not be said for later years.

Prokofiev tended throughout his career to depend on mentors; he channeled his creative energy through the visions of others. Diaghilev, Meyerhold, and Eisenstein provided essential guidance in the prewar period. It could be argued that, in the immediate postwar period, official artistic doctrine itself became his muse. He accepted, for example, a commission from the Committee on Arts Affairs to write a pedagogical work for talented children, the most privileged of the sole privileged class of the Soviet Union, to perform in recitals and competitions. The result was a miniature three-movement Sonata for Solo Violin or Violins in Unison, accessible in both the practical and aesthetic senses of the term: a piece in the spirit of Fritz Kreisler's arrangements for budding violinists. The pedagogic intention is manifest in the etude-like progression from simple figurations in the sonata-allegro first movement to double stops in the mazurka-inspired third movement. The fascination of the score rests in its expressive dualities:

when performed by violins in unison, it assumes somber Baroque traits; when performed by a soloist it becomes starkly modern. For unknown reasons, neither Oistrakh nor any other professional played the Sonata for Solo Violin in public following its completion. The dual-purpose score actually went unperformed, by child or adult, until June 10, 1959, when the Italian-American virtuoso Ruggiero Ricci premiered it at the Moscow Conservatory.

Prokofiev embarked in June 1947 on a commissioned rescoring of his 1930 Fourth Symphony, itself related to the material of his 1929 ballet *L'Enfant Prodigue* (*The Prodigal Son*), the final work produced by Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The stakes were high: Prokofiev resolved to redo a work from a different era, one that he had never been satisfied with, along the lines of his vaunted Fifth Symphony. It was a standard Soviet exercise in *pererabotka*: compliant adaptation to an approved template. The biblical subject matter of *L'Enfant Prodigue* and—by partial extension—the first version of the Fourth Symphony needed to be amended, the tale of an uncertain, questing liberal filtered through a heroic paradigm.¹²⁰ Having heard the criticism that the little-performed score affronted Soviet symphonic ideals (the performances that had occurred in Moscow on October 30, 1933, and November 20, 1937, had been equivalent flops), Prokofiev accepted a proposal to redo it.

He lengthened the Symphony by sixteen minutes, making the largest of the adjustments to the beginnings and endings of the first, third, and fourth movements, and subjecting most of the melodic material to internal expansion. Movement 1 was enriched by the addition of an invocal fourteen-measure introduction typified by flexible phrasing and, when reprised at the end of movement 4, excessive effects: fortissimo dynamics in the woodwinds and a brass choir evocative of clanging bells. Prokofiev reworked the transitions between theme groups and slackened the form, relying on recurrences of what Malcolm Brown calls “the toccata-like figuration” of the first theme of the exposition to lend unity to the whole.¹²¹ Movement 1 was once a textbook sonata-allegro structure, but it became, as the revision progressed, increasingly disordered and inconsistent—less an accompaniment to a choreographic narrative than a narrative of its own. It adopted, in essence, some of the prolix, discursive traits of the Fifth Symphony: casual tempos, irregular groupings with the phrases, inconsistent assemblages of phrases within the period, thematic variation over repetition, and a misalignment of accents between the melodic and accompanimental lines. The

melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic writing became the musical equivalent of verbal periphrasis. And, of course, the final stage in the conversion of movement 1 concerned the orchestration. Prokofiev thickened the sound, introducing accented staccato figures in the upper and lower registers and placing them in bold relief. *Divisi* became more prominent, as did combined pizzicato and non-pizzicato figures. The lower brasses and strings received greater emphasis in climatic passages, which Prokofiev transformed into emphatic declarations.

Mira's cheerful description of Prokofiev's revision of the Fourth Symphony makes the effort seem earnest, but in this context earnest might also have meant earnestly, sincerely acted: "Seryozha finds that there is a lot of good material in the Symphony [he had by this point launched into the first, second, and fourth movements], but the fact of writing the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies showed him that from the perspective of general construction the Fourth Symphony could be done more forcefully."¹²² Prokofiev is either confessing that the framework of the symphony needed rebuilding, or pretending to confess to this effect, or allowing Mira to fictionalize this confession in her memoirs.

Subtle backing for this last assertion comes from what Mira excludes from her memoirs. Save for passing references to the dates and places of their premieres, she avoids discussing the chamber works that find the composer turning inward. Besides the Violin Sonata, the most beguiling of these scores is the Ninth Piano Sonata, which Prokofiev completed at Nikolina Gora on September 27, 1947 (thematic material dates from the mid-1940s). The inner movements of this modest masterpiece suggest a retreat into a world of non-virtuosic, impenetrable rumination; the outer movements self-consciously revisit the basic (for him) elements of composition: sonata-allegro and sonata-rondo forms, C major, and the instinctive and intuitive movement of the hands at the keyboard. As Rita McAllister points out, Prokofiev's penchant for sudden contrasts between the "white" keys (C major, first and foremost, but also modally inflected D minor, E minor, and A minor) and the "black" keys (D-flat major and B-flat minor) can be partially ascribed to his working methods at the piano, where his imagination liaised closely with his fingers in the formation of melodic and harmonic material.¹²³ The Ninth Piano Sonata lays this method bare, although it is too deliberate, too preconceived to be called improvisation.

In a political climate based on absolutes, the vagaries of this music are striking. The opening melody of the third movement, in A-flat major, recurs

with interpolations, coming to a decisive pause on a cadence in measure 8, a less decisive one in measure 26, and an even less decisive one in measure 72. The opaqueness of the line stems from an overlapping of opening and closing gestures; the eventual dissolution of the texture, moreover, reflects a methodical, step-by-step elimination of functional harmonies and the privileging of chromatic voice-leading patterns. The movement witnesses what Deborah Anne Rifkin, to whom these points are indebted, calls the “complete collapse of functional harmonic progression.”¹²⁴

The overall effect is one of deterioration, disintegration, as though the composer was attempting to find a dignified, non-clichéd way of fading out. But the music is not about silence, a marker of death. It is about the potential of sounding forever. Each of the four movements of the Sonata concludes with a quotation from the movement ahead, except, of course, the last movement, which concludes with a quotation from the first one. The tonalities of the quotations differ from the movements in which they appear, and from the movements to which they belong, making them apparitional. The music remembers the future; it is a circular set of reminiscences about that which has yet to occur.

But the Sonata also completes a trajectory of another sort: it evolves from fragments, coaxes those fragments into specific forms, and then returns to those fragments. It is not a cohesive work, but a set of sketches. The Sonata exposes the techniques of its own realization, a point borne out by the manner in which Prokofiev presented it to its dedicatee, Richter, a steadfast advocate of the composer's works:

“I’ve something interesting to show you,” he announced as soon as I arrived, whereupon he produced the sketches of his Ninth Sonata. “This will be your sonata. Don’t think it’s intended to create an effect. It’s not the sort of work to raise the roof of the Grand Hall [of the Moscow Conservatory].”¹²⁵

Disappointment with the Sonata’s “domesticity” ceded to infatuation: “I love it very much,” Richter declared in his memoirs.¹²⁶ Prokofiev anticipated that the Sonata would be premiered in early 1948, but politics got in the way. Richter did not unveil it until April 21, 1951, at a Composers’ Union performance in early celebration of the composer’s sixtieth birthday (April 23). Too ill to attend, Prokofiev listened to the performance on the telephone.

Chizhik-Pizhik

In the fall of 1947, the thirtieth anniversary of the Revolution obliged Prokofiev to emerge from introspection and compose tributes for official celebrations. During the summer, Myaskovsky had shared with Prokofiev his plans to construct a cantata for soprano *ad libitum*, chorus, and orchestra around select verses by the poet Sergey Vasilyev, the outcome being a “mystical nocturne” titled *Kremlin by Night*. Despite being dedicated “to the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution,” Myaskovsky’s score is equivocal, indicating an obsession with death and tragic silence: “Someone, somewhere, very muffled / Rang out in the night! It’s Old Woman History / Fetching her keys” (Kto-to gde-to ochen’ glukho / Prozvenel v nochi! To Istoriya-Starukha / Dostayet klyuchi).

Prokofiev, in striking contrast to Myaskovsky, quickly responded to the official summons with a pair of exceedingly tame compositions, the first being a thirteen-minute score alternately titled *Festive Poem* and *30 Years Overture* in the manuscript.¹²⁷ An arc-shaped work intended to express the mythic grandness of the Leninist-Stalinist timeline, but also including passages redolent of *Lieutenant Kizhe*, it no sooner received its Moscow premiere—on October 3, 1947, under the direction of Konstantin Ivanov—than it was dismissed as listless (in the opening and closing sections) and pallid (in the middle). Prokofiev had greater official success with his *Cantata for the Thirtieth Anniversary of October*, an economical setting of a Party-line poem by a Party-line poet (Yevgeniy Dolmatovsky) that bore the title—in the poet’s final version of the text—“Praise to You, Motherland!” (Slav’sya Rodina!).¹²⁸ Once the text had been approved by the censorship board Glavlit, Prokofiev tweaked it for musical reasons, and assigned it a slightly catchier title: “Flourish, Mighty Land” (Rastsvetay, moguchiy kray). In 1962, when the Cantata was published with a de-Stalinized text, it took yet another title: “Praise to You, Our Mighty Land” (Slav’sya, nash moguchiy kray).

Prokofiev did not devote much of his limited time to these routine works. No sooner had he completed the orchestration of the *Festive Poem* on July 15, 1947, than he began writing “Flourish, Mighty Land.” Four pages of sketches went into the first work, five into the second. Upon receipt of the commissions from the Committee on Arts Affairs, he bristled that his first and greatest paean to the Revolution—the 1937 *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*—remained unperformed.

The November 12 premiere of “Flourish, Mighty Land” was conducted by Nikolay Anosov at the Moscow Conservatory following a visit to Nikolina Gora earlier in the month to review the score with the composer. The performance concluded a diverse concert that also featured selections from *Cinderella* arranged for violin and orchestra. Mira indicates that both Myaskovsky and Richter hailed “Flourish, Mighty Land,” dubbing it one of the best works written for the anniversary and an obvious improvement over the *Festive Poem*. Others, however, found it trite, the melodic writing reminiscent of nursery rhymes like “Chizhik-pīzhik.”¹²⁹ Coarsely translated, the rhyme begins “Chizhik-pīzhik where’ve you been? Drinking vodka on the green!” (Chizhik-pīzhik, gde tī bil? Na Fontanke vodku pil!) It was an apt comparison—the Pioneer march in the opening and closing sections of the Cantata recalls *Peter and the Wolf*—but Mira considered it demeaning.

“Flourish, Mighty Land” is at once the antithesis and *pererabotka* of the Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October. Gone are the historical references, the expressive grandeur, the *musique concrète*, and the primary source texts. Dolmatovsky’s poem and Prokofiev’s music combine images of perky labor with paeans to the land. It consists of a single, through-composed movement cast in the keys of A-flat major and D-flat major, the scale collections enriched, as usual, with the second scale degree, the flattened sixth degree, and the flattened seventh degree. In the opening instrumental passage, the trumpets and strings alternate marchlike and hymnlike strains, after which a fanfare provides a bridge to the first and second choral stanzas. These latter establish a mood of halcyon bliss. In the middle section of the Cantata, the subject switches from the friendship of the peoples—expressed using consonant harmonies—to the glorification of Stalin, Lenin, and the Party.¹³⁰ The Cantata thereafter becomes animated, introducing a pulsing accompaniment pattern similar to the opening march. At the climax of this section, Prokofiev invokes a Russian operatic cliché: he blends a chant of “Glory, glory, glory” (Slava, slava, slava) in the upper voices with a stately recitative in the lower voices, the result being a simulacrum of jubilant chiming.

The Last Success

Besides the hypnotizing “slava” repetitions, the most distinctive feature of the eight-minute Cantata is its emphasis on pastoral sounds—an emphasis that is also found in the much more amorphous Sixth Symphony. Cued by

Prokofiev himself, critics of the period interpreted the work as a sequel to the Fifth Symphony, the somber, rustic persona of the latter complementing the strident, heroic persona of the former. (The same contrast, of course, marks Beethoven's middle symphonies.) Brown hears the Sixth Symphony as a quasi-theatrical amalgam of "orchestral recitatives," balladic passages redolent of folksong and, in the finale, an evocation of a dance-based "peasant celebration." The dramatic gestures, Brown qualifies, "are balanced by a loftier intellectualism."¹³¹ In the compact developmental passages, the score signals a struggle between an external and internal, objective and subjective, representation of grand events. Overall, the ambiance is meditative. The bucolic murmurs of the woodwind-dominated exposition of the first movement might be likened to unseen life forces, which regulate both the body's agitations and the mind's calculations. The introversion of the Violin Sonata and Ninth Piano Sonata finds a large-scale orchestral equivalent.

Prokofiev intended to freight the score with this baggage, as gleaned from his remarks to Mira about the ending of the third movement, which recapitulates material from the first movement in portentous rhythmic expansion, the result being a fracturing of the form and deterioration of the mood. The climax comes between rehearsal numbers 116 and 117, with the staggering interpolation of chromatic sonorities—essentially vertical renditions of the descending motives assigned to the upper and lower brasses at the beginning of the first movement—whose aftershocks resonate through a pair of fermatas. At an October 9, 1947, rehearsal in Leningrad, Prokofiev told Mira that the interpolations represented "questions cast into eternity." One of the questions, he later disclosed, concerned the purpose of life.¹³² This rare (even to Mira) explanation of programmatic intent permits a Mahlerian reading of the finale, one in which a celebration of life cedes to a premonition of death (musical, physical, and metaphysical). The concluding measures suggest less heroic affirmation than acceptance of the unknown.

The Sixth Symphony received its premiere on October 11, 1947, with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Mravinsky, who had burnished his credentials in 1937 with a stunning premiere of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony. Mravinsky, a staunch advocate of Prokofiev's music in the postwar period, became acquainted with the Sixth Symphony at Nikolina Gora. On March 21, 1947, he and Atovmyan traveled there to acquaint themselves with the score, which Prokofiev had composed intermittently

in different locations, sketching it between June 23, 1945, and October 9, 1946, and orchestrating it between December 10, 1946, and February 18, 1947.¹³³ After hearing Prokofiev play through the Sixth Symphony, Mravinsky praised its grand sweep—the sound, he enthused to Mira, spanned “one horizon to the other”—and requested the privilege of conducting the premiere.¹³⁴

On October 8, Prokofiev arrived at the European Hotel in Leningrad for a week-long stay. Beyond assisting Mravinsky in the rehearsals of the Sixth Symphony, he reunited, after long separations caused by the war, with two of his longtime friends: the pianist Vera Alpers and the philologist Varvara Demchinskaya, whom Prokofiev had been helping to make ends meet since the death of her husband in 1942. Business errands included meetings with Sherman and Nikolay Goryainov, the director of Malegot, regarding the stalled rehearsals of *War and Peace* Part II. Goryainov boarded Prokofiev's train just before he left Leningrad to discuss the “difficulties” of the situation. Before Part II could be staged, he grumbled, it needed further review by cultural policy-makers.¹³⁵

The news depressed the composer, and cast a pall over his trip to Leningrad. Mravinsky's performance of the Sixth Symphony received strong initial notice in the press, however, and more than fulfilled his expectations. The most detailed review came from the musicologist Izraïl Nestyev, who traveled to Leningrad to report on the Symphony for *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*. Puzzled by the score, Nestyev had pestered Prokofiev for technical insights. He received the tersest of responses, and found himself having to concoct his own programmatic interpretation, one that assigned patriotic intent to the thematic structure. Nestyev proposes that, for narrative purposes, Prokofiev reversed the traditional roles of the exposition and development sections of the first and second movements. Melodic material is no sooner introduced than transformed in the opening sections; the middle sections, in contrast, involve a kaleidoscopic succession of images. The description of these images tends to be heavy-handed. Concerning the second movement, for example, Nestyev enthuses: “The new theme of the Largo is less a contrast than a continuation of the first—a beautiful instrumental arioso, suffused with reserved wisdom. Suddenly the lyric tone is superseded anew by the fantastic specters of war.” The movement “culminates in a ‘circular’ reprise of the first two themes. ‘I am young, I am strong, I defeated the powers of evil and I earned the right to happiness’—such can be divined from the assured major sounds of the Largo.” Nestyev applies similar terms to the third movement. Here

“a cheerful melody in the spirit of Mozart or Glinka” is intertwined with the strains of a rustic dance. But the life-affirming tableau is once more marred by the incursion of a “titan,” a passage of “incessantly repeating fanfares” that revisits the traumas of the past.¹³⁶

It remains unclear whether Prokofiev appreciated Nestyev’s interpretation of the Symphony. (In later years, he and the musicologist would have a terrible falling out, owing to the latter’s negative reevaluation of this score, along with Prokofiev’s entire operatic output, for its supposedly modernist decadence.)¹³⁷ He probably preferred more abstract, poetic readings of the work, such as that offered by the musicologist Yulian Vaynkop. In a pre-premiere lecture, Vaynkop likened the opening trombone line in the Symphony to the “scrape” of a key in a “rusted lock.”¹³⁸ The door holding that lock opened onto an elusive, eclectic creative domain. Extending the point, one could posit that, while the melodic and harmonic patterns have immanent narrative potential, the somewhat intangible character of their assemblage denies programmatic interpretation—and this may have been the composer’s point. The Sixth Symphony embraces much of the surface rhetoric of a socialist realist narrative but little of its cohesiveness.

For the critics, there remained enough dialectical content in the Symphony to merit it a place in the repertoire. The same could not be said of Prokofiev’s brief *Ode to the End of the War*, which received its premiere on November 12, 1945, under the direction of Samosud, but which, because of his health problems, Prokofiev did not in fact hear until October 17, 1947. Shortly after his return to Moscow from Leningrad, he attended a performance of the work at the Chaikovsky Concert Hall on a program that featured, as the main attraction, Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony. The audience included a group of Pioneers, to whom sweets were handed out as a special treat; Prokofiev, according to Mira, feigned snatching them away when he rose to take his bow. Despite receiving an encore and a cascade of bravos from the sated children, Prokofiev felt that the *Ode* was but a “modest success”; Mira, true to form, delighted in the “uniqueness” of the audience response.¹³⁹

This score warrants comment less for its melodic and harmonic content than for its outlandish orchestration. In an October 12, 1945, article in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, Prokofiev reported that he intended the *Ode* to “glorify the arrival of peace” and to “reflect the joy of peaceful labor and the pathos of renewal.”¹⁴⁰ These banal points fail, however, to capture the strangeness of the score, which translates Soviet architectural monumentalism into sound.

The *Ode* is the musical equivalent of an overdetermined Stalinist skyscraper. The instrumentation, which was partially inspired by the instrumentation of Stravinsky's rustic wedding ballet *Les Noces*, involves eight harps, four pianos, three tubas, three saxophones, and an expanded brass and wind section—the kind of expressive excess that totalitarian culture both fosters and demands.¹⁴¹ To foreground the overlooked instruments of the orchestra, and to accentuate registral extremes, Prokofiev eliminated string instruments (violins, violas, and cellos) from the scoring. The *Ode* is cast from beginning to end in the major mode; the choice of gestures seems intended to overwhelm the listener. The music, a testament to State power, is awesome in both the positive and negative senses of the term.

Monumental music is not necessarily inspired music, however: Prokofiev conceived the *Ode* as a stack of building blocks of increasing heaviness, with drama ceding to surface display.¹⁴² He outlined the score in a 1945 notebook as follows:

- Part 1: Slow
- Part 2: From the *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, fast, workman-like
- Part 3: Slow, but more ornate
- Part 4: Birth of joy
- Part 5: Russian, joyous (3rd theme)
- Part 6: Part 2, elaborated
- Part 7: Part 5
- Part 1: Part 1, against the background of parts 1 and 5
- Coda: Solo, 4 timpani, F major, extract from part 2¹⁴³

The manuscripts reveal that Prokofiev spent more time orchestrating the twelve-minute work than actually composing it. He began the scoring in Ivanovo on August 20, 1945, and finished it over five weeks later on September 29, whereas the composing took only half as long.¹⁴⁴

The aspiration toward the monumental was not the only reason for the protracted creative process. In the summer of 1945 Prokofiev was still recuperating from his concussion. His health was so poor during the period that, as noted in the last chapter, he at first refused to work with Eisenstein on *Ivan the Terrible* Part II, suggesting that Popov be enlisted for the illustrious, high-stakes project in his place. His health improved, but he had frequent setbacks. Headaches and nosebleeds prevented him from attending most of

the rehearsals and some of the performances of his new works. The October 18, 1947, performance of the *Ode* may have been a minor affair, but Prokofiev was grateful to be there.

He was also grateful to return to Leningrad in late November, where he managed to see both *The Duenna* (November 23) and *Cinderella* (November 24). The Kirov Theater production of the opera had substantially improved since its long-delayed premiere the previous fall—a premiere that Prokofiev, again owing to his health, had missed. By the time he saw *The Duenna*, it seemed of less personal importance: his central concern was the fate of *War and Peace* following the contentious July and October closed-door performances of select scenes from Part II. Nothing had happened with the opera since his last visit to Leningrad and his dispiriting conversation with Goryainov, and nothing was going to happen. In the absence of what Mira called a “resolution to the question of the staging” of Part II, Prokofiev was forced to bid a depressing farewell “to the dream of attending a rehearsal.”¹⁴⁵ He was wholly unaware of the behind-the-scenes intrigue at Malegot, whose administration had decided, under extreme political pressure, to terminate work on *War and Peace* in favor of *The Great Friendship* by the second-tier composer Muradeli. This opera concerns the struggle between pro- and anti-Bolshevik forces during the civil war, and the struggle between Russians and the indigenous peoples of the North Caucasus. The pro-Bolshevik hero is based on a real-life figure, the “extraordinary Commissar” Sergo Ordzhonikidze.¹⁴⁶ Representing the heroism of a Stalin compatriot, *The Great Friendship* was staged by no fewer than thirteen Soviet theaters in celebration of the anniversary of the Revolution. Malegot was obliged to follow suit.¹⁴⁷

In the absence of progress on *War and Peace*, Prokofiev, in a gesture of desperation and determination, signed a 10,000-ruble contract with the Kirov Theater for another, much shorter opera taken from the pages of recent Red Army history: *A Story of a Real Man*.¹⁴⁸ The choice of subject for the project (discussed in chapter 7) came from a Committee on Arts Affairs official (Kukharsky). Having settled on it, Prokofiev convinced himself that *A Story of a Real Man* would, upon completion, win favor—even if it included a grim episode in an operating room and, as Myaskovsky reminded him, lacked strong female roles.¹⁴⁹ Enslaved by his own theatrical imagination, Prokofiev continued, despite multiple frustrations, to define himself first and foremost as an opera composer. He trusted, as a matter of self-motivation, that his hospital opera would have greater fortune than the

six operas—*The Gambler*, *The Love for Three Oranges*, *The Fiery Angel*, *Semyon Kotko*, *The Duenna*, and *War and Peace*—that had preceded it.

The end of 1947 marked the end of Prokofiev's tenure at the forefront of Soviet music, a position he had struggled to achieve for over a decade, at the expense of his marriage, his health, and elements of his technique. On December 25, Mravinsky conducted the Moscow premiere of the Sixth Symphony. The work remained in favor with the critics, who, writing in accord, continued to highlight its conception at the end of the Great Patriotic War and its depiction of triumph through sacrifice. According to the critical consensus, the traumatic harmonic and melodic deformations at the end of the third movement elevated the syntax to the level of the sublime.

The concert was Prokofiev's last unhampered, unmediated success.

DropBooks

1948

During the war, when Prokofiev devoted himself to the national struggle, his conviction that his music occupied a domain above and apart from the concerns of the real world did not waver and caused him no particular political problems.¹ Following the receipt of three First Class Stalin Prizes for the Fifth Symphony and the Eighth Piano Sonata, the Violin Sonata in F Minor, *Cinderella*, and another such award for his involvement with Eisenstein on *Ivan the Terrible* Part I, his official standing reached a zenith.² He earned generous advances and royalties from the Committee on Arts Affairs, Muzfond, the State theaters, and other parts of the disorganized State commission (Goszakaz) system. Prokofiev's greatest concern remained the absence of a complete premiere of *War and Peace* and the fact that many of his large-scale works remained unpublished. On January 6, 1948, he wrote to Molotov at the Kremlin requesting his assistance with the second of these concerns, remarking, as a transparent bargaining ploy, that foreign firms seemed more interested in publishing his works quickly than Muzgiz.³ Prokofiev's complaint was rerouted from Molotov's to Khrapchenko's office, with a brief informative reply (a listing of Prokofiev's publications with Muzgiz) attached to it. It is less noteworthy that Prokofiev approached Molotov for assistance with a routine professional matter (Molotov had long served as a pastor to Soviet artists) than that the request went unheeded.

For elite artists living under Stalin, official approbation tended to alternate with official condemnation. The specific reasons for the changes in

their fortunes are difficult to rationalize. Vacillations in cultural policies affected their careers, but so, too, did disputes within the cultural agencies, miscommunications between those agencies and other tiers of government, and personal rivalries. Prokofiev's standing declined radically in 1948, owing less to ideological considerations than the vagaries of policymakers, factionalism in the bureaucracy, and financial crises. The power of the regime was absolute in the sense that it followed no consistent rules.

On February 10, 1948, for example, Prokofiev attended a ceremony at the Kremlin elevating his official status from Merited Activist of the Arts of the RSFSR to People's Artist of the RSFSR—a title he received from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR on November 5, 1947.⁴ (Prokofiev did not live long enough to receive the final award in the sequence: People's Artist of the USSR. His greatest honor, the Lenin Prize, was posthumously bestowed on him in 1957.) February 10, 1948, was also the day that finishing touches were put on a Central Committee Resolution that would, once it had been published, discussed, and enacted, abruptly curtail his creative plans. For unexplained, perhaps unexplainable reasons, the regime almost simultaneously lauded and condemned him, branding him and Shostakovich—who attended the same ceremony—both a People's Artist and anti-People Formalist.

The apparent target of the Resolution was *The Great Friendship*—which must have struck Prokofiev as bitterly ironic, given that this opera had supplanted his own *War and Peace* in the Malegot repertoire. The document dates from February 10 (it appeared on page 1 of *Pravda* the next day, page 1 of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* on February 14, and page 1 of the January–February 1948 issue of *Sovetskaya muzika*), but it articulated concerns about *The Great Friendship* and its composer (Muradeli) that had been festering since at least August 1, 1947, and that might easily have resulted in a cancellation of the premiere production. In a memorandum that day to the Central Committee Secretary and Politburo member Andrey Zhdanov titled “On the Prohibition of the Performance of V. I. Muradeli's Opera *The Great Friendship*,” Georgiy Aleksandrov reported that the “propaganda directorate has familiarized itself with the content of this opera and considers it flawed, offering a distorted portrayal of the Bolshevik struggle in the North Caucasus in 1919–20 and the revolutionary activity of Com[rade] Ordzhonikidze during these years.” Aleksandrov recommended “the withdrawal of published piano scores of the opera...and the issuing of an order to the Committee on Arts Affairs (C[omrade] Khrapchenko) to suspend work on the opera using the published piano score.”⁵

Despite Aleksandrov's complaint, the Bolshoy Theater performed *The Great Friendship* in celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Revolution. The prohibition came only after hundreds of thousands of rubles had been spent on the opening run. Parroting points made by Aleksandrov, the February 10 Resolution attacked the opera for its misrepresentation of historical events (it failed, understandably enough, to portray the "friendship of the peoples" during the civil war), but also for its musical language, which excluded "the wealth of folk melodies, songs, refrains, formal- and folk-dance motives that so enrich the artistic creations of the peoples of the USSR, in particular the artistic creations of the peoples populating the North Caucasus, where the events represented in the opera unfold." Most of the score adhered in letter and spirit to the principles of *partiynost'*, *narodnost'*, and *ideynost'*, but it was nonetheless deemed a failure. The failure was not isolated; rather, it was symptomatic of the "unhappy state of contemporary Soviet music" and the pernicious influence of "composers of the formalist orientation."⁶

Here the real target of the Resolution comes into view: the Soviet musical elite, and the agencies that supported them. Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturyan, Vissarion Shebalin, Popov, and Myaskovsky are singled out for absorbing modernist creative techniques to the detriment of the listening public and for shunning the accessible Russian folk traditions in favor of inaccessible abstraction. Irrespective of the accolades heaped upon them by cultural agencies during World War II, their works were reinterpreted by Central Committee members as emblems of decadent distortion. They represented not Soviet culture, but "the contemporary modernist bourgeois [culture] of Europe and America," the "dementia" of this culture, its "complete negation of musical art," and its ultimate "dead end."⁷ Despite its militant tone, the Resolution permitted a bureaucratic solution to the crisis: the dismissal of Khrapchenko from the Committee on Arts Affairs and of Khachaturyan and several others from the Orgkomitet of the Union of Soviet Composers.

Zhdanov oversaw the writing of the Resolution and took it upon himself to regulate the ideological content of the arts. (Also at the start of 1948, he devoted time to Communist Party activities in Eastern Europe, underproductive collective farms, and the Tito affair; he was an extremely busy individual.)⁸ The history of the Resolution is complex, but thanks to recent archival work and the publication of memoirs by the people who attended to its recommendations, a picture is beginning to emerge of the interactions that resulted in the musical stars of the Soviet Union being undermined by

lesser lights. Beyond the verbal and musical content of Muradeli's opera, the leadership questioned the staggering cost of the staging. On January 5, Stalin and his aides attended a performance of the opera at the Bolshoy Theater. The next day, Zhdanov and two other Central Committee employees, Dmitriy Shepilov and Polikarp (Aleksandr) Lebedev, met with the participants in the production and demanded an explanation for its political problems and financial excesses.⁹ This meeting, which targeted Muradeli and Khrapchenko, began with Zhdanov damning the opera—in language reminiscent of “Muddle Instead of Music”—for its

hysterical outbursts, exertions, and cacophonous jolts, which explode and literally frighten the listener...The musical accompaniment does not accord with the moods and emotions of the dramatic personnel...and it is characterized by muddle and lapses—sometimes the chorus waits for the orchestra to end; sometimes the orchestra is silent while an artist sings.¹⁰

Fulfilling his obligatory role, Muradeli thanked Zhdanov for his “correct” observations and then, in an effort to deflect blame, expressed the hope that “all of our composers and musicologists hear this criticism” of the path taken by Soviet music in the postwar period. Shepilov stepped in to remind the gathering that the Central Committee Propaganda and Agitation Department had identified defects in the opera before its premiere.¹¹ He and Zhdanov then assailed Khrapchenko for not responding to Aleksandrov's memorandum.

This meeting was followed by a larger gathering at the Central Committee, a three-day event beginning on January 10 that involved artists of hard- and soft-line political mindsets. Zhdanov solicited opinions on *The Great Friendship* and Soviet music in general from former members of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians, career-minded faculty members at the Moscow Conservatory, and musical representatives from the Republics. Kiril Tomoff, the author of a history of the Union of Soviet Composers, contends that two “populists”—Vladimir Zakharov, an erstwhile RAPMist who contributed, against Prokofiev's wishes, to the score of *Cinderella*, and Aleksandr Goldenweizer, a Moscow Conservatory piano professor— inveighed against the “highbrow” composers Shostakovich and Knipper. Tomoff adds that, after the meeting, a Party official named N. S. Sherman submitted an

unduly harsh report to Zhdanov that accused Myaskovsky of indoctrinating his Conservatory pupils in discredited techniques.¹²

Prokofiev at first declined to attend the gathering, but an official traveled to his dacha on the second day and convinced him otherwise.¹³ Unhappy that his routine had been disrupted, he apparently fumed “Pust’ Zhdanov ‘podazhdanov!’”—a pun that translates as “Let Zhdanov wait!”¹⁴ The cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovich recalls the following anecdote about the gathering:

When Zhdanov launched into his angry speech against composers at the [Central Committee], Prokofiev was in the auditorium. A funereal silence reigned, but he was chatting with his neighbor, the future conductor of *War and Peace*. From two seats away a member of the Politburo turned to him: “Listen. This concerns you.” “Who are you?” asked Prokofiev. “My name isn’t relevant. But know this: when I tell you something you’d better pay heed.” “I never pay attention to comments from people who haven’t been introduced to me,” Prokofiev threw back, unfazed.¹⁵

Khrennikov confirms the anecdote—it is potentially apocryphal—and identifies Prokofiev’s addressee as Matvey Shkiryatov, the deputy director of a commission responsible for regulating the Communist Party ranks (and not a Politburo member, as Rostropovich claims). Shkiryatov participated in a massive purge of the Leningrad Communist Party in 1949–50, resulting in the arrest of some two thousand Party workers. Zhdanov took grim delight in Prokofiev’s impetuous exchange with Shkiryatov: according to Khrennikov, he “broke off his speech and began to laugh” at the scene.¹⁶

The January meetings provided Zhdanov with the semblance of a mandate for restructuring the musical establishment. In accord with a January 26 Politburo memorandum, Lebedev replaced the discredited Khrapchenko as chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs. Although battling a myriad of ailments precipitated by the Leningrad Blockade, Asafyev became titular head of the Orgkomitet of the Union of Soviet Composers. There were other changes: Khrennikov, a Zhdanov favorite, became General Secretary of the Orgkomitet of the Union. Two other contributors to the anti-formalist campaign, Zakharov and Marian Koval, served as his assistants.¹⁷ Muradeli came in for severe censure, albeit less for his operatic misdemeanors than his

administrative ones, especially his financial mismanagement. He lost his post as chairman of Muzfond.¹⁸

Atovmyan, Muradeli's shrewd deputy, was also sacked, an event that greatly affected Prokofiev, who had benefited from Atovmyan's creative, financial, and material support since even before his relocation to Moscow. In his memoirs, Atovmyan recalls facing extensive questioning about "Prokofiev's debt, in particular about the motives behind my granting of a 'fantastic' long-term loan to him for the purchase of a dacha in Nikolina Gora." "We invited Prokofiev to the USSR," Atovmyan commented, "promised him a two-story private residence and various forms of creative assistance. I was the initiator of this invitation and, recognizing the vital need for the loan, boldly took it upon myself to make the arrangements."¹⁹ In an attempt to absolve himself of charges of corruption, Atovmyan asked Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, and Shostakovich to "declare in writing that their honoraria were received in the amounts certified by the Presidium of the Orgkomitet and that if the overseeing bodies considered the amounts incorrect, that they each bore responsibility for returning the 'excess' honoraria in their possession to Muzfond."²⁰

Olga Lamm, the niece and adopted daughter of Pavel Lamm, relates that Zhdanov orchestrated the denunciation of the six composers named in the Resolution by pitting musical factions against each other. She further relates that Zhdanov solicited advice on the draft and final version of his Resolution from three members of the musical establishment: the ailing, fearful Asafyev, the old-fashioned conservatory pedagogue Goldenweizer (a devotee of Medtner, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin who disdained Schoenbergian Modernism), and the mid-level composer Shaporin.²¹ Olga Lamm's anecdotal recollection of the fallout from the Resolution includes paraphrases from conversations among the individuals it most affected. On the day of the Resolution's publication, she remembers, the composer Aleksandr Gedike informed her father

I met Sasha [Goldenweizer] today, and he said to me: "Rejoice, true art has triumphed!" I replied: "How can you be happy when our wonderful musicians have been stigmatized. You must have lost your mind! This is a disgrace: each composer should be able to choose his own path in art. Come to your senses!"²²

Most musicians reacted to the Resolution with silence, as though waiting for the other shoe to drop. Curious as to why Myaskovsky refused to comment on it, Olga confronted him:

“Nikolay Yakovlevich, how can you be silent and not respond to the disgraceful and ridiculous accusations directed at composers?” Nikolay Yakovlevich looked at me very seriously and said only: “How can one communicate with people who speak in different languages? They don’t even understand each other.”²³

Eisenstein’s Death

Prokofiev did not immediately have time to contemplate the implications of the Resolution. On February 11, 1948—one day after the Resolution’s release—his cinematic benefactor Eisenstein suffered a second heart attack and died, leaving his memoirs and two books unfinished, *Ivan the Terrible* Part II unrevised, and *Ivan the Terrible* Part III in fragments. He had jotted down his last thoughts on the trilogy in August and October 1947, in the rough draft of a comparative theoretical essay called “*The Idiot and Ivan the Terrible*” (“Idiot” i “Ivan Grozniy”).²⁴ His last diary entries allude to Stalin’s latest purge, the anti-cosmopolitan campaign; a last letter, to the director (and fellow montage pioneer) Lev Kuleshov, records the moment his scarred heart stopped working.²⁵

From the start of 1946, Eisenstein believed that his end was imminent; he predicted that he would not live beyond 1948. In hospital after suffering his first heart attack, he informed Prokofiev: “Life is over—there remains only a postscript.”²⁶ The director died nineteen days after his fiftieth birthday; the paperwork had just been prepared to award him an Order of Lenin, both in tribute to his birthday and his quarter century of “fruitful creativity in the realm of Soviet cinema.”²⁷

Prokofiev and Mira received the news indirectly from Eisenstein’s longest-serving cinematographer, Eduard Tissé, and absorbed the blow in private. They reminisced about their long-term friendship with the director and, on the professional front, the essential help he provided in Alma-Ata with the original version of *War and Peace*. Mira also recalled Eisenstein teasing Prokofiev for “peddling old hoofs,” that is to say, reusing tunes from

previous works in his film scores. It remains unclear from her whitewashed account whether the recycling was a source of disagreement between the two of them. On February 13, 1948, the couple traveled to Moscow to pay their respects to the director at the House of Cinema: Prokofiev stood in the honor guard until 1 p.m. The funeral took place that afternoon at the riverside cemetery of Novodevichiy Convent.²⁸

Over the next few days, Prokofiev consulted with his colleagues about the Resolution. According to Olga Lamm, Mira was “scared to death” by the document, and most likely convinced Prokofiev to write his humble response to it.²⁹ His reaction, like that of the other denounced composers, was monitored at the top, as evidenced by a memorandum submitted by Shepilov to Zhdanov on February 13, 1948:

According to insufficiently trustworthy sources Prokofiev reacted to the resolution quite calmly; he's planning to send a letter to Zhdanov with a request for a meeting, specifically a consultation about a new opera on a Soviet theme, which Prokofiev has already begun composing (apparently based on the Polevoy novella *A Story of a Real Man*). Shostakovich is in a more anxious and nervous state, but he is similarly planning to compose the opera *The Young Guard* [*Molodaya gvardiya*]. Composer Shebalin officially welcomes the resolution; however, those close to him say that it is wrong for his name to be in the resolution, that it figures there as the result of someone's “machinations.”³⁰

A later portion of the memorandum involves the pianist Richter, who, in defiance of the Resolution, planned to keep performing Prokofiev's music:

Certain artist workers are expressing their sympathies to the group of formalist composers. So at the adjudication of a concert program by the pianist Svyatoslav Richter, scheduled for February 17, Richter insisted on including works by Prokofiev. When employees of the Philharmonic advised him not to include one of the formalist sonatas of Prokofiev in the program, he declared, “Then I'll go to Prokofiev's home and play his sonata for him as a sign of respect.”³¹

As these extracts from the rumor mill make clear, Shepilov and Zhdanov were interested in controlling but not silencing the composers named in the Resolution; they were to be redeemed once they made obeisance to the Central Committee apparatus.

Instead of submitting his letter of contrition to Zhdanov, as Shepilov predicted, Prokofiev sent it to Khrennikov and Lebedev, the new chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs. Before receiving their approval, it was distributed to Stalin and other Politburo members, who offered it their tacit sanction. The letter was read in Prokofiev's absence at a General Assembly of Soviet Composers. Held February 17–26, the gathering sought to chart the future of music in the RSFSR and its satellites through the poison thicket of what the text of the Resolution called “formalist distortions and antidemocratic tendencies...foreign to the Soviet people and its artistic tastes.”³² Prokofiev excused himself from the gathering on account of health troubles. Myaskovsky, who was battling the flu, rejected the advice of his onetime student Kabalevsky and also declined to attend.³³ By telephone, Prokofiev informed Myaskovsky of his pragmatic decision to submit an apology. Dismayed by his friend's lack of resolve, Myaskovsky declared that he “found it impossible” to apologize for mistakes he had not made. Insincere expressions of atonement, he added, meant nothing in a society dictated by “ignorance and lack of good conscience.”³⁴

Prokofiev's February 16 apology has attained iconic status in music history, though not because it reflects the plight of nonconformist artists in totalitarian societies. Rather than responding to the Resolution with lip service alone, the prudent approach, Prokofiev sought to find an artistic escape route within it. He contends that he had already fulfilled official demands in his recent works, which shunned “formalist” esotericism in favor of tuneful “simplicity.” He likewise justifies his reliance in his operas on continuous declamation by asserting the influence of Chaikovsky, whom Soviet cultural officials upheld as a positive example for socialist realist composers. Prokofiev pledges that his next opera would maintain a judicious balance between strophic and through-composed passages.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Prokofiev's letter is the reference to the 1936 denunciation of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. Herewith, two separate paragraphs:

Some elements of Formalism were characteristic of my music as early as fifteen to twenty years ago. I was probably

infected through my contact with a number of Western trends. After *Pravda* (under the direction of the Central Committee) had exposed the formalist errors in Shostakovich's opera, I pondered over the various creative devices in my own music and concluded that the path I had taken was wrong. In a number of the works that followed (*Alexander Nevsky*, *Zdravitsa*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the Fifth Symphony), I attempted to liberate myself from formalist elements, and I think I succeeded in this to some extent. The persistence of Formalism in some of my works can probably be explained by a degree of complacency on my part, and a failure to understand that our people have no need for such things. After the Resolution, which has had a rousing effect on the entire community of composers, it has become clear exactly what kind of music our people need; and now it is also clear how we can overcome the formalist disease.

In opera, I have often been reproached for allowing a preponderance of recitative over cantilena. I am very fond of the stage, and I think that all who come to the opera house have every right to expect stimulation not only for the ear, but also for the eye (otherwise they might as well have gone to a concert). But all kinds of stage action find a musical correlate in recitative, whereas cantilena brings the action more or less to a halt. I will recall, in some of Wagner's operas, what a torment it was for me to watch the stage over the course of an hour-long act when not a single character moved. It was this fear of stasis that prevented me from dwelling on cantilena for longer stretches. With the Resolution in mind, I have carefully reconsidered the issue and I have now come to the conclusion that in every opera libretto, some passages demand recitative, while others demand arioso, but over at least half of the opera, there are passages that the composer may present in either manner. Take, for example, Tatyana's letter scene in Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*: it would have been a relatively simple matter to write most of this as recitative, but Chaikovsky decided to direct his music toward cantilena instead, transforming the entire letter into a huge aria; at the

same time, the scene was able to benefit from some action on stage, thus providing food for the eye as well as the ear. That is the direction I want to take in my new opera, which is based on a contemporary Soviet plot, *A Story of a Real Man*, by Polevoy.³⁵

Here one finds the composer backing away from his earlier operatic method, which stressed continuous declamation over melody, yet also implicitly damning the stand-and-sing style of Khrennikov's theater projects. There is little of Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* in *A Story of a Real Man*, however. The Chaikovsky invoked by Prokofiev in his apology is not a post-Romantic composer, but a reimaged Soviet one.

Unlike Prokofiev, Shostakovich responded to the Resolution in journalistic point form, as though trying to dispense with an irritating formality as succinctly as possible. "In my *Poem of the Motherland*," he offered, "I attempted to create a symphonic work suffused with songfulness and melodiousness. It proved to be a failure." "But I will try again and again," he added, his language evocative of an ill-behaved schoolchild stuck in detention, writing the same line ad infinitum on a chalkboard.³⁶ Unlike Prokofiev, Shostakovich had been through the ritual of denunciation and rehabilitation once before, and had perfected the art of actively resenting, rather than actively resisting, a regime whose identity was wrapped up with his own.

Despite his fragile health, and despite the loss of his most important mentors—Diaghilev, Meyerhold, and Eisenstein—over the previous two decades, Prokofiev had maintained a mask of indifference to the setbacks in his professional life. In 1948, however, he became afraid. His past distinguished him from his "formalist" colleagues: he had departed Russia with Lunacharsky's blessing to spend his early career in France and the United States, repeatedly performed in the European capitals, visited Canada, Morocco, and Japan, and married a woman of Spanish descent in Ettal, Germany. In an effort to avoid self-incrimination, he disposed of the foreign books and journals in his possession and ensured that other compromising items, including letters to and from Russian émigrés, were cleared out of the dacha.³⁷ It was a common-sense course of action: the dacha was searched, and he risked detainment had such items been found. Prokofiev was Ukrainian-born and Russian-educated, but his peripatetic past marked him as an outsider. Lina, his estranged, foreign-born wife and the mother of his two sons, also bore this mark. She, however, lacked the protection of international fame.

Lina's Arrest

Throughout the war, Prokofiev had supported Lina and their two sons. Before his return to Moscow in October 1943 he routinely enlisted colleagues who were traveling on business to the capital to hand-deliver parcels to his family. Even after his return, however, he seldom crossed the doorstep of the Ulitsa Chkalova apartment and tended to communicate with his wife through intermediaries. Prokofiev asked Oleg to give a letter to Lina requesting a divorce. The request, dating from the summer of 1947, was not granted; indeed, the letter may not have been delivered. Oleg claimed that he did not have the heart to give it to his fragile mother, but Mira believed that he had.³⁸

Lina still hoped to leave the Soviet Union. Following the example of her neighbor Annet Weinstein, she petitioned the authorities for an exit permit. Weinstein, a former French national married to an architect, received her visa; Lina did not.³⁹ Her desperate, depressed condition haunted Prokofiev, but it does not seem that he tried to help her to return to France. Even had he tried, he would not have succeeded.

There was no question of them reuniting. On November 22, 1947, Prokofiev filed a petition in a local court (in Moscow's Sverdlov district) to divorce Lina. His petition was rejected, albeit for reasons he could not have foreseen. On November 27, the court ruled that his October 1, 1923, marriage had no legal basis, since it had taken place in Germany rather than the Soviet Union and had not been registered with Soviet officials. The ruling stated that "marriages of Soviet citizens abroad have judicial standing only if they are registered by representatives of the RSFSR abroad with subsequent notification of the Central Department of ZAGS [Zapisi Aktov Gran-zhdanskogo Sostoyaniya]," the State Marriage Bureau.⁴⁰ Since this had not happened in Prokofiev and Lina's case, their marriage became null and void the moment they took up residence in the Soviet Union. Even by Soviet legal standards, the ruling was a farce: for one thing, it asserted that the marriage had taken place not in 1923 but in 1918, before Prokofiev had left Russia for the United States, and well before he even knew of Lina's existence. For another thing, the ruling asserted that the couple had been Soviet citizens at the time of their union, which, to be sure, they were not. The ruling did not address the status of their two sons.

Prokofiev came to terms with the strange decision after he verified it with a second judicial body.⁴¹ Less than two months later, on January 13, 1948, he married Mira. They received a certificate bearing the signature of

a ZAGS official and the seal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (to which ZAGS belonged), and a new stamp in their internal passports.⁴² By bureaucratic fiat, Mariya Ceciliya Abramovna Mendelson, born in 1915 in Kiev, Ukraine, replaced Carolina Llubera Codina as the legal partner of the composer Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev, born in 1891 in Sontsovka, Ukraine. Cutting his ties to Lina made Prokofiev less of an outsider in Soviet society, but it made her even more of one.

Lina was arrested on the evening of February 20, 1948—just four days after Prokofiev had submitted his statement of contrition for his musical misdeeds to the General Assembly of Soviet Composers. Desperate for contacts with the outside world, Lina had continued to attend diplomatic events—as “Madame Prokofieff”—and to interact with foreign embassy officials. Two of these officials, Anna Holdcroft and Frederick Reinhardt, offered Malcolm Brown brief accounts of their sightings of Lina, and of Lina’s futile efforts to obtain permission to leave the Soviet Union. The most detailed of these accounts comes from Holdcroft, a British Foreign Office employee between 1944–48 and 1953–57. She and Lina met in 1945 at a diplomatic reception at the Metropole Hotel. “I visited her apartment very seldom,” Holdcroft wrote to Brown,

but I was there on the evening before she was taken away. I know I had been seen going there—but it was too late to retreat. I told her of this the moment I arrived; we agreed I should phone if I was seen going away. There was no need, for I saw no one “recognizable.” We were to meet on neutral ground in two days time. On the next day I had a strange phone call telling me not to go to the place of the meeting. I feared the meaning of this—one acquires a sixth sense in the Union! My fears were confirmed later through mutual friends.⁴³

Reinhardt, who was stationed at the American Embassy between 1941 and 1948, commented that “in the early postwar period,” Lina brought herself “unfavorably to the attention of the authorities” by persisting in her effort to obtain an exit permit.⁴⁴

Prokofiev learned about Lina’s arrest on February 21. Svyatoslav and Oleg had taken the train from Moscow to the village of Perkhushkovo and then walked the remaining thirteen kilometers to Nikolina Gora. They

told their father what had transpired as soon as he appeared at the door of the dacha:

“Wait,” he said, and left to get dressed. The three of us walked along the road. We told him about the arrest and search; he asked a few spare questions. The news we had brought obviously shocked him. He was dispirited and very reticent. He likely felt, of course, that some part of the blame lay on him: if they hadn’t separated, perhaps this wouldn’t have happened.⁴⁵

In a published interview with Nataliya Savkina—from which the preceding information and quotation is taken—Svyatoslav recalls his mother receiving a telephone call on the evening of February 20 asking her to collect a parcel from some acquaintances. Lina left the apartment building and, according to neighbors, was muscled into a car parked by the front gate. There ensued a night-long search of the apartment by the police. Prokofiev’s August Förster piano, a portrait of Lina by the eminent Silver Age painter Nataliya Goncharova, jewelry, record albums, photographs, documents, and other personal effects were all confiscated. In a muted aside, Svyatoslav, then twenty-four, describes the looters finding his postcard collection of Soviet leaders:

The postcards had been with me a long time and in my thoughtlessness I did not recognize that it was necessary from time to time to remove the pictures of those leaders who had been repressed. During the search, one of the MGB [Ministry of State Security] officers came across a photograph of the latest enemy of the people. He laid it aside for the file. I attempted a protest: “I bought them all at once, just like they were sold at the store.”⁴⁶

Once inventoried, these and other incriminating items were either immediately bagged and hauled away or left behind in a sealed room in the apartment. The latter items were claimed by the police in the late summer and the apartment vacated.

Svyatoslav and Oleg approached Shostakovich for help, but in this sorrowful instance, the influential and concerned composer could do nothing

for them. News of the incarceration reached Lina's mother in France, who sent an anxious telegram to the children. Soon after, they inquired at a police information outlet on Kuznetsky Most concerning their mother's whereabouts, and learned that she had been interned at the Lubyanka, the headquarters of the MGB and Ministry of Internal Affairs, the successors to the NKVD, before being transferred to Lefortovo prison, a solitary confinement facility in the northeast region of the city. Following a three-month investigation and six-month interrogation, Lina was court-martialed by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR (*Voyennaya kollegiya Verkhovnogo suda SSSR*). Svyatoslav reports that once the verdict had been rubber-stamped his mother

was found guilty of espionage and betrayal of the homeland and assigned a sentence of twenty years in the harsh camps. Later, she never spoke about prison, about her questioning, but from separate, very brief recollections I know that she was confined to a cell, that there were nighttime interrogations with a bright light in the face, and much else. During the interrogations they called my father "that traitor," "that white émigré," and other similar things.⁴⁷

The specific charges were enumerated by Lina in a 1954 petition for release addressed to the Soviet Attorney General: "attempting to defect"; "theft of a secret document from [Sov]informbyuro," the propaganda agency for which Lina had worked during the war as a part-time translator; facilitating the smuggling of a letter across the border from a certain "Engineer Shestopal" to his wife, Susanna Rotzenberg; and "criminal ties" to foreign embassy employees, including Holdcroft and Reinhardt. Lina concluded her exposure of the falseness of the charges with a simple question: "What am I guilty of?"⁴⁸ The question went unanswered.

Lina completed the first three years of her sentence in a large central camp at Inta, in the Komi Autonomous Republic (northeastern Russia). From there, she was moved to a facility at Abez, also in Komi, and then to a facility at Potma, in the Mordovian Autonomous Republic (southeastern Russia). The three camps were distinguished in the Gulag system by their large numbers of non-Russians. Inta and Abez included former peasant landowners from Western Ukraine and Belorussia (convicted for obstructing Soviet agricultural policy, specifically the program of forced collectivization) as well

as citizens from the three annexed Baltic nations. Potma housed numerous Western Europeans. Details of Lina's time in the camps come from the memoirs of two other prisoners, the British Embassy staffer Inna Chernitskaya and the writer Yevgeniya Taratuta. Like Lina, they were incarcerated under the treason statute (58-1a) of the Soviet penal code. (Chernitskaya notes that she and Lina were both friends with the American reporter Edward Snow, and suggests that this friendship might have been another pretext for Lina's arrest.)⁴⁹ Life in the camps meant poor nutrition, a harsh climate, a brutal work regime, routine abuses, wretched housing, and inadequate clothing. Those who survived these conditions credit inner fortitude, spiritual faith, and the power of denial. Taratuta notes that Lina refused to "believe that what had happened to her was real, did not believe that the situation would persist, and did not believe at all in her twenty-year sentence."⁵⁰ She did not discuss the circumstances of her arrest with the other women in her barracks, except to say that the half-year interrogation was excruciating.

Men and women were kept apart in the Gulag system. At Inta, men toiled in coal mines outside the barracks; women cleared roads and plastered walls for new buildings. Chernitskaya mentions that Lina cleaned latrines, filthy labor that at least allowed her to converse with other educated women.⁵¹ Letters from her sons lifted her spirits. She was rarely permitted to send letters, but she could receive as many as she liked, but not everything her sons wrote reached her. When packages arrived, she shared what the guards did not pilfer with the other women in her barracks. Lina took part in ideological reeducation programs, including a "cultural brigade" that performed in neighboring camps. At Abez, she sang in a choir whose repertoire came from film musicals, however by this time her voice had faded. Toward the end of her incarceration, she worked for a camp hospital.

Lina was released on June 30, 1956, three years after Prokofiev's death, which occurred, as is often noted, on the same day as Stalin's. Lina learned immediately about Stalin's death, but news about her husband took several months to reach the camp. Lina, Taratuta reveals, kept up with her husband's career as best as she could but knew little, if anything, about his last days. Returning to her barracks from a work shift, "someone came running from the bookroom and said: 'They just announced on the radio that, in Argentina, a concert was held in memory of the composer Prokofiev.' Lina Ivanovna began to weep and, without uttering a word, walked away."⁵²

By the time she returned to Moscow after her liberation (she traveled using the prison camp release form as her sole means of identification), the

family apartment on Ulitsa Chkalova had been confiscated by the government. It was reassigned to a popular graphic artist, Nikolay Sokolov, who received five Stalin Prizes, one for his grotesque caricatures of Hitler. Svyatoslav, his wife, and Oleg moved to a two-bedroom unit on Ulitsa Kupriyanova. Lina went with Svyatoslav to collect her certificate of rehabilitation from a bureaucrat who admitted that her case was a “fabrication.”⁵³ In the months ahead, she sought to reassert her rights as Prokofiev’s legal wife. On April 12, 1957, the oversight committee for the Moscow courts reversed the November 27, 1947, decision that nullified her marriage to the composer. The reversal, which restored Lina’s claims to the Prokofiev estate, stemmed from a July 8, 1944, decree by the Supreme Soviet, the most powerful legislative body in the Soviet Union, to the effect that marriages conducted abroad remained legal at home. This reversal, however, was itself reversed. On March 12, 1958, the Russian Supreme Court renamed Mira as Prokofiev’s legal wife. The issue at hand was not the fact of Lina’s marriage to the composer but, once again, the fact that the marriage had not been registered with the Soviet government.⁵⁴ In the end, the composer’s estate was divided between the two widows. Mira died on June 8, 1968, from a presumed heart attack.⁵⁵ Until Lina was finally allowed to emigrate in 1974, she lived in Moscow in a one-room apartment on Kutuzovsky Prospekt—a street named for the Russian Field Marshal who, as Prokofiev’s *War and Peace* dramatizes, rebuffed Napoleon in 1812. After leaving Moscow, Lina resided in Paris and London and visited New York. She died in London on January 3, 1989, at the age of ninety-one. Her two sons had by this time also emigrated. Oleg, who became a noted visual artist, died at the age of fifty-nine in 1998. Svyatoslav lives in Paris with his son Serge Jr.

Deprivation

The events recounted in the preceding paragraphs concluded long after 1948, but they were all precipitated in that year. In the early spring, as Prokofiev absorbed the shock of Lina’s arrest, he perhaps prepared himself for the same thing. He was not arrested, but as the repercussions of the February 10 Resolution intensified, his career went into freefall.

Between April 19 and 25, the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Composers took place in Moscow at the Hall of Columns, whose auditorium still bears the weight of the Stalinist show trials. Prokofiev and Mira attended for one day before fleeing back to the peace and quiet of the dacha. They heard

Asafyev's keynote address, which was read in his health-related absence by Vladimir Vlasov, and which marked the nadir of his career. Asafyev did not attack Prokofiev, whom he still considered a friend, in the text, but he tore into other eminent Russian composers. Asafyev began by comparing and contrasting Shostakovich's Eighth and Ninth symphonies (1943 and 1945). Unlike the Eighth Symphony, the Ninth had been denounced by reviewers, if not the actual public, as unpatriotic. "I once joked that this symphony went 'unheard' throughout musical society," Asafyev declared, "and not entirely because it was misunderstood. No, we understood it, correctly, and then we perceived this simple-minded, formalist composition as an insult, unworthy of our musical art."⁵⁶ He then turned to the expatriate composer Stravinsky, about whom he published an insightful book in 1929, but whom he now associated with "fascist 'aesthetics' and philosophy." "In my time," Asafyev commented, "I have written a lot about Stravinsky and must say that I, like many others, once misperceived the individualistic rebellion in [his] creativity as progressive. Stravinsky has come to the same end as many other petit-bourgeois 'rebels'—he has crossed over into the camp of darkest reaction."⁵⁷ This "darkest reaction," he continued, is most pronounced in Stravinsky's Norton Lectures at Harvard University, which were first published in English in 1942 under the title *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons* (the lectures were read in French). Asafyev quotes two lines from chapter 3 of the book, and conflates these with a paraphrase from chapter 4.⁵⁸ He refrains from taking up chapter 5, which includes a devastating indictment of Soviet music.

In his follow-up speech, Khrennikov offered an overview of Russian music since the Revolution, pointing out where composers had adhered to and deviated from the progressive enriching of the Glinka and Rimsky-Korsakov traditions. Dzerzhinsky's *The Quiet Don* was feted as the ideal, and Muradeli's *The Great Friendship* as its subversion. Most Soviet composers, Khrennikov conceded, had aspired to heed the dictates of the various "historic" *Pravda* articles about music making in Russia and the Republics. However, the move toward greater national content, ideological cohesion, future-perfect "Realism," and audience appeal held both potential and peril: Aleksandr Kasyanov's 1939 *Stepan Razin*, a folk drama about the rebellion of a seventeenth-century Cossack pretender to the tsarist throne, merited praise for its choral passages; Valeriy Zhelobinsky's 1938 *Mother*, a setting of Gorky's novel about the ideological awakening of the parent of a socialist agitator, merited critique for its primitive dramaturgy.⁵⁹ Khrennikov offered

no specifics in his speech, opting instead to trudge through a long list of ideological successes and failures. He labeled Prokofiev (like Shostakovich) an out-of-touch radical, lumping together *The Duenna*, the Cello Concerto, and the Sixth Piano Sonata as examples of “extreme” formalism intended for a “narrow circle of aesthete-gourmands.”⁶⁰ Without pausing to explain his culinary metaphor, Khrennikov proceeded to denounce Prokofiev’s *The Year 1941* for failing to express the “sensation of historic events during the first phase of the Patriotic War.”⁶¹ Khrennikov also damned *War and Peace* for its “profound” dramaturgical “flaws.” The composer’s egregious departures from Tolstoy’s novel attested to his “modernist” subjectivism.⁶²

Asafyev’s and Khrennikov’s speeches bore the same workaday title “Thirty Years of Soviet Music and the Tasks for Soviet Composers.” Khrennikov later claimed that they were penned by a team of ghostwriters, and their semantic similarity does indeed suggest a conspiratorial collusion.⁶³ Having heard the first of the speeches, Prokofiev decided not to remain for the second. Mira chatted in the foyer with some of the other escapees; Prokofiev wandered next door to look over the posted results of a chess tournament. Mira answered questions about the composer’s health and well-being; one familiar figure, Kukharsky, lauded his “dignified behavior” in the face of hardship.⁶⁴ Mira did not at first know what he meant, but she later deduced that Kukharsky was referring to Prokofiev’s pledge to engage the masses in his future work. Her confusion suggests that only a handful of people at the Congress actually paid attention to the proceedings. For most of the speakers and the audience, the event was a tedious ritual.

The Congress stenograph makes for depressing, redundant reading: speaker after speaker mounted the podium to salute Zhdanov, parrot rhetoric about consonance and folklorism, and point out the anti-democratic behavior of comrades Khachaturyan, Myaskovsky, Popov, Shebalin, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. Day two of the Congress involved seven long reports by delegates from the Republics and newly annexed Baltic States; day three featured eight more. The next three days offered lectures from no fewer than forty-five composers, along with a dutiful reading of telegraphed greetings from the Committee on Arts Affairs, the Union of Soviet Writers, and a group of conductors and musicians from the Leningrad Military District. Of the censored composers, only Muradeli and Shostakovich chose to speak—the latter with apparent distress.⁶⁵ According to the stenograph, the gathering came to a close with pledges to continue the Russian classical tradition in opera, to create symphonies and tone poems evocative of the optimistic times, and to

fuel the effort to build Communism with marches and choruses. The mandatory, groveling paeans to Stalin, the “inspiration” behind the Union’s “creative victories” and “best friend of Soviet art,” brought the crowd to its feet for “sustained and long-lasting applause.”⁶⁶

One item of business remained: the election of Union board members and administrators. The general discussion that preceded the secret voting was, according to Tomoff, fractious, with nasty notes passed from the floor to the podium, and petitions to add the names of “formalist” composers to the ballots ignored. “Of the fifty-one composers and musicologists elected to the governing board,” Tomoff writes, “most of those who had been named to the Secretariat by the Central Committee resolution of 26 January finished far back in the pack. The new boss, Khrennikov, did the best, but he finished behind sixteen other candidates, most of whom were uncontroversial selections from the national republics or well-respected senior composers like [Mikhail] Gnesin, Dmitriy Arakishvili, and Sergey Vasilenko.”⁶⁷

For Prokofiev, the most obvious result from the Resolution and the follow-up meetings was financial hardship. Eight of his works were barred from performance—*The Year 1941*, *Ode to the End of the War*, *Festive Poem*, *Cantata for the Thirtieth Anniversary of October* “with Dolmatovsky’s text,” *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*, the 1934 piano cycle *Thoughts*, and the Sixth and Eighth Piano Sonatas.⁶⁸ In addition, the generous advances for new works, publications, and performances that enabled him to support himself, his family, and certain friends ceased. He found himself unable to keep up with the payments on the 150,000-ruble loan that Atovmyan had granted him for his dacha. Prokofiev’s personal debt as of August 1948 was 180,000 rubles, which the Union of Soviet Composers—then under audit—demanded that he settle straightaway. He was forced to plead with the new chairman of Muzfond, the film composer Nikolay Kryukov, for a three-month grace period. As a gesture of good faith, he asked Kryukov to apply his anticipated honorarium from a *Cinderella* orchestral suite to the debt, though he acknowledged that it, like the 1,000 rubles he scraped together as a June payment, was “merely a drop in the sea.”⁶⁹ Lamm decided to return the 6,000 rubles that Prokofiev had paid him for copy work, telling him to “pay it when you can.”⁷⁰ Myaskovsky considered the degrading situation “dangerous” to Prokofiev’s precarious health.⁷¹

Prokofiev’s finances did not improve, as he hoped they would, in the three months ahead. In fact, it took over a year, and the lifting of the prohibition against performances of the aforementioned scores, before income

began to trickle in again.⁷² Rostropovich, who was presumably introduced to Prokofiev in the spring of 1947 and premiered his late works for cello, asserts that, in the immediate aftermath of the Resolution, the composer “did not even have money for food.”⁷³ Although he lacked an extensive personal support network, Prokofiev relied for a time on help from others.

His financial troubles are sadly evident in a November 5, 1948, letter to the Moscow branch of the Union of Soviet Composers, in which he announces his intention “to compose 10 small pieces for children’s repertoire, for violin and piano; I ask the [Union] to provide me with the necessary comradely support. The pieces could be unified by a common theme, based, for example, on the subject of a children’s fairy tale.”⁷⁴ Prokofiev proposes finishing the score by May 31, 1949; the commission was evidently not provided. Another glimpse into his situation comes from a September 2, 1949, letter from Mira to Myaskovsky, who was himself at pains to make ends meet following his post-Resolution dismissal from the Moscow Conservatory. Mira reports that after several trying months, the household finances had begun to improve. Prokofiev’s 40 percent advance for the publication of the Third Suite from *Romeo and Juliet*, she reported, would see them through a few weeks. There was also hope that a new Cello Sonata, which Rostropovich was preparing for a run-through either at the Committee on Arts Affairs or the Union, would be approved for performance and publication. Although Prokofiev’s doctors advised him against taking on any new projects, he decided that a vocal work on the theme of world peace might interest the Committee, but he did know who if anyone would endorse his petition to compose it. (It took over a year for the project, *On Guard for Peace*, to be completed.) Prokofiev added a tender postscript to the letter expressing gratitude to his old friend for the help: “Kolenka,” he wrote, “you are an angel”—Myaskovsky had taken time away from his own work to correct the proofs for the Suite.⁷⁵

A Story of a Real Man

In official circles, Prokofiev was viewed as a pariah for far longer than Shostakovich and the other composers targeted in the Resolution. The prolongation of his banishment stemmed from the fallout over a work that, incongruously, Prokofiev thought would return him to favor, and which he had touted in his February apology: *A Story of a Real Man*. Once the political and financial implications of the Resolution became clear to him,

he resolved to complete the opera as quickly as possible. He began it on October 23, 1947, and handed the short score to Lamm for orchestration on May 11, 1948. Most of the work occurred between March and May. He toiled side by side with Mira on the opera, drafting the ten scenes in order once the libretto had been agreed upon, and taking pains to ensure that the score contained well-known folksongs and sing-along choruses. The choice of subject matter came, as noted in chapter 6, from Kukharsky, but in the aftermath of the Resolution the Committee on Arts Affairs official had second thoughts about his involvement with the chastened composer and decided to back away from the opera. He sheepishly told Mira that some of his colleagues “chided him for advising Seryozha to write *A Story of a Real Man*, fearing that he might take a fancy to the [source story’s] morbid side.” Mira sought to assure him that his worries were needless, since the score would focus on the “triumph over suffering, on courage, and on optimism.”⁷⁶ Such, at least, is how Mira describes the incident in her memoirs, but even if—as her memoirs intimate—she adhered to Party teachings, it is unlikely that she would have communicated in such stilted, clichéd language.

In effect, Prokofiev decided that the ideological underpinning of his first Soviet opera, *Semyon Kotko*, would become the ideological underpinning of his newest one, with words and music once again blending to inform the listener that victory for the Soviet system is assured even before its enemies are engaged. The sole challenge confronting the battle-hardened heroes is the Christian Science–like mastering of mental inhibitions and physical weaknesses through acts of will.

A Story of a Real Man is based on an orthodox 1946 novella by Boris Polevoy (real surname Kampov), a World War II reporter for *Pravda* who turned his experiences at the front into propaganda tales for teens. Near the end of his career, he served as editor of the journal *Yunost* (Youth). His novella, a recipient of a First Class Stalin Prize, gilds the real-life heroism of the pilot Aleksey Maresyev, whose plane was shot down behind Nazi lines in a dogfight and who, despite grave injuries to his legs and a weak constitution stemming from childhood malaria, survived for eighteen days in a snow-covered forest before being found by the children of displaced village farmers.⁷⁷ Commissioned to expand his original short-story version of the tale into a novella, Polevoy embellishes and exaggerates the central events. He relates in elaborate detail the wounded hero’s struggle to keep himself from freezing to death, his pain-induced deliriums, his stand-off with a bear, and

his poignant memories of his sweetheart, Olga. Aleksey's peasant rescuers ply him with soup and regale him with stories of their own suffering at the hands of the Nazis: their relatives were executed, their land torched, and their homes ransacked. His Red Army comrade Andrey arrives to transport him to a military hospital, where a well-known surgeon tells him that his gangrenous legs must be amputated below the knees. There ensue terrible nightmares in which Aleksey sees himself "crawling on stumps," with Olga "standing on the sandy riverside in a bright-colored frock blown about by the wind, light, radiant and beautiful, gazing at him intently and biting her lips." "That's how it will be!" he grieves upon waking. "And he broke into a fit of convulsive, silent weeping, burying his face in his pillow. Everybody in the ward was deeply affected."⁷⁸

The co-occupants of the ward include a grizzled veteran of the civil war who, disdaining self-pity, challenges Aleksey to overcome his handicap in keeping with the spirit of the Revolution. In Prokofiev's operatic rendition of the tale Aleksey answers in woozy mixed metaphors: "A pilot without legs is like a bird without wings." "But you're a Soviet man," the veteran repeatedly assures him, each time pushing the phrase higher by half step in a halo of strings.⁷⁹ The final measures of the scene (rehearsal numbers 175 and 176) invoke a waltz rhythm, a marker in Prokofiev's operas for dream states, hallucination, and, in this instance, thought control. In the next scene, the veteran, having noted the splendors of springtime, passes away, a bittersweet event that highlights his role as magical helper in the tale. His is the spectral voice of socialist realist discourse, the instigator of the miraculous happy ending. (The veteran is a fictional character; he does not figure in Maresyev's actual biography. Polevoy inserted him into the narrative for didactic purposes.)

Aleksey's rehabilitation on double prostheses begins at an air force sanatorium in early spring. The sanatorium, once a tsarist palace, is depicted by Polevoy less as a scene of gritted-teeth resolve than ever-expanding optimism, with Aleksey's recovery aided by thoughts of returning to the skies, a letter from Olga, anecdotes with fellow flyer Andrey Degtyarenko, and soulful conversation with fellow patient Grigoriy Gvozdyov, a decorated tank commander fearful that his teenage pen pal Anyuta, who has stolen his heart, will reject him when she sees his facial scars. (The wounds are merely external: he suffers no internal damage; his organs, like his convictions, are intact.) The comradely repartee bolsters Aleksey's spirits, as does the arrival on the ward of a seductive physical therapist with flaming red hair, who

offers, after much prodding on Aleksey's part, to teach him to dance on his artificial limbs:

The terms on which she consented to teach him were severe: he must be obedient and diligent, try not to fall in love with her, since that interferes with the lessons, and chiefly—he must not be jealous when other partners invite her to dance, because if she were to dance only with one partner she would lose her skill, and besides, there was no fun sticking to only one partner.⁸⁰

This incident became the pretext for Prokofiev's somewhat implausible insertion of a waltz, fox-trot, and even a rumba into the eighth scene, a sincere attempt to escape what Kukharsky deemed the "morbid" aspect of the drama, but one that completely backfired. His critics found the scene distasteful, and intimated that he had lost his judgment. The intent behind the drama, however, was rational: it endorsed the Stalinist-era endorsement of art about physical suffering. Caryl Emerson remarks here that, in socialist realist aesthetics, "to feel pain was by no means presented as a shameful thing. Pain was to be administered (in symbolic woundings, construction accidents, on battlefields), but it was to be transcended." This idea doubtless resonated with Prokofiev, who had been living with pain for years, and whose body, like Maresyev's, had become what Emerson calls "a 'classic' Stalinist-era text, wounded and hurting."⁸¹

The final chapters of the source novella for the opera find Aleksey committed to returning to combat, though the journey from hospital to hangar proves arduous, with the pilot confronting both physical and bureaucratic hurdles. In the penultimate scene, he finds himself cooped up in a communal apartment in Moscow, grumbling that the authorities have not allowed him back into combat. Katerina Clark notes that Polevoy "gives what was first done against the romantic backdrop of snow and dense forest a more prosaic rerun in the world of Soviet institutions." "Usually" in a socialist realist novel, "the situation is reversed," with "what was first treated at a prosaic level" transposed "to a more dramatic setting in the world of the elements."⁸² In *A Story of a Real Man*, however, nature is embodied not in the forest but in the azure skies. Upon clearing the bureaucratic hurdles, Aleksey returns to flight, finishing the chore left undone when he crash-landed. He shoots down three enemy planes on low fuel during the Oryol-Kursk battle.

In the opera, the curtain falls as the hero reunites with his sweetheart and a journalist—Polevoy himself—appears with a request for an interview. The episode is altered in the truncated 1960 and 1963 performing editions of the score, with the chorus recapping a mass song about the regrowth of an oak tree felled by lightning. These editions likewise excise the role of Anyuta, the scene on the lake, and all mention of the place where Olga and Aleksey had first met: Stalingrad.⁸³

The mass song is “The Song of the Motherland” (*Pesnya o Rodine*) that was recycled, in expanded form, by Prokofiev from his *Seven Songs for Voice and Piano* of 1939.⁸⁴ Evocative of prewar innocence, the tune does double duty as an emblem of the protagonist’s heroism and, moving from the particular to the general, the Russian people’s fortitude. It is first heard in scene 3 in the orchestra, as the peasant lad Seryonka, assigned a speaking part, recalls the Nazi assault on his village. It recurs in scene 6 as the veteran begins his hypnotic repetition of “But you’re a Soviet man!” Aleksey falls under the spell, intoning the same words to the same tune with a faraway look in his eyes. The veteran’s scene 5 ballad reprises the music of the first and second entr’actes, which narrate Aleksey’s ordeal in the forest. Prokofiev here reveals that the old man, too, overcame physical and mental challenges in his service to the regime. When, in scene 5, Aleksey becomes anxious, the kindhearted head nurse Klavdiya sings “The Green Grove” (*Zelyonaya roshchitsa*), a lullaby Prokofiev previously arranged for a collection of twelve Russian folksongs for voice and piano.⁸⁵ His other self-references include “The Soldier’s [Fighter’s] Sweetheart” and “A Warrior’s Love” from the *Seven Mass Songs* of 1942. The two melodies dovetail as Olga’s theme, which first sounds in scene 2. A choral melody from the wedding in *Ivan the Terrible* Part I recurs in the scene 9 barcarolle performed by Aleksey, Andrey, and Anyuta on the lake by the sanatorium. (Olga is not actually present in the scene: her voice is heard from offstage, and Aleksey answers it.) The choral refrain in the film, an ode to Russian nature, is replaced in the opera with mention of a starlit journey to the front. The words bluntly affirm that Aleksey will succeed in his campaign to return to battle and, afterward, will settle down with his beloved—once she too enlists in the service. His semiconscious recitation in the forest scene of the self-deluding line “Everything will be fine” (*Vsyo budet khorosho*) literally works for him like a charm.

To further ensure that the audience would leave the theater humming, Prokofiev recycled four additional items in the opera: his 1944 March for

concert band, the soldier's song "How delightful the Moscow road" from *Lermontov*, and the melismatic songs "What, Sashenka our joy, has made you so blue?" (Shto zhe ti, Sashen'ka-radost', priunila?) and "My gentle dream, my happy dream" (Moy son miliy, son schastliviy) from the Russian folksong collection. The first item provides material for the overture, the second for the final scene in the aerodrome, the third for the villager Varvara's dirge about her husband, from whom she has not received word since he went to the front, and the fourth for the tearful episode of the veteran's peaceful, wistful death. The profusion of self-borrowings finds Prokofiev virtually inventing a new genre: the catalog opera, consisting of tunes of his own that had succeeded in the past.

Excluding a scene 5 *chastushka* about Anyuta's seductive caprices, Prokofiev took pains in the framing and climactic scenes to forge motivic links between the solo numbers and mass choruses, or what official doctrine termed the inferior wishes of the individual and the supreme wishes of the collective. Despite the awkward backtracking from operatic realism to the number format, *A Story of a Real Man* demonstrates that the composer's talent for emotionally and psychologically reified text setting remained intact throughout his career.

The opera contains elements of oratorio while also, like the unrealized *Khan Buzay*, making extensive use of cinematic devices. One writer on the opera, L. Aleksandrovsky, argues that Prokofiev experimented in the first and second scenes with the operatic equivalent of fade-ins (the soothing voice of Olga's apparition), long shots (the thick forest, whose perils are implied by terse chromatic runs and the occasional augmented second), and close-ups (Aleksey's cries of distress).⁸⁶ The post-surgery delirium scene represents the macabre, recent past on one side of the stage and the halcyon, distant past on the other—the theatrical equivalent of a cinematic split-screen effect. Aleksey cannot help but listen to the amplified voices of the surgeons as they efficiently plan and perform the operation: like the villains of *Semyon Kotko*, they declaim rather than sing their lines. From childhood, Aleksey hears his mother advising him to wear warm socks in the damp cold; in semiconsciousness in the present, he sadly replies to her singsong patter: "Mama, what use are socks to me now?" (Mama, zachem teper' noski?) Olga emerges from a corner shadow to remind him that she expects him to return to her, whatever his condition. Her appearance is the emotional high point of the scene, and it comes with the quotation from the song "A Warrior's Love," which, as discussed in chapter 4, dominates the score of the unreleased film *Tonya*.

In scene 2 of the opera, moreover, Olga's photograph comes to life in much the same fashion as Tonya's does at the end of the film.

The verb "to wait" (*zhdat'*) links Olga's fade-out with the fade-in of Andrey, Aleksey's comrade, who reminds him that the air force, like his girlfriend, expects him to return to duty.⁸⁷ Individual and collective desire are subsequently synthesized in the protagonist's actions, resulting in his reunion with Olga and his fellow pilots on the airstrip.

Thus *A Story of a Real Man* combines the operatic, the nonoperatic, and even the anti-operatic. Its unevenness is less a reflection of hasty work than fundamental indecision. Prokofiev found himself struggling to preserve his artistic identity within un-artistic constraints. To accommodate official demands for melodiousness while also preserving some vestige of his text-setting technique, he relied extensively on borrowed vernacular melodies familiar to Soviet audiences. The jingles about chicken soup and farmers' daughters do not, however, mask the extreme anxieties behind the score. Future events would demonstrate that Prokofiev's effort to portray a "real" man like a "real" composer was all but futile, a waste of energy. Myaskovsky felt from the start that the opera was in trouble, and that the months ahead would remain awful for his friend. "I looked over Prokofiev's [latest score]," he wrote in his diary. "As always it is extremely interesting, clear-cut, and expressive—but all the same it reflects notions of music drama that are now very 'passé.' I didn't like the libretto: grim emphases without coherent political direction. I fear it will be taken for a joke."⁸⁸ Myaskovsky articulates a hopeless double-bind: the more Prokofiev tried to make his music accessible, the more it lent itself to interpretation as sarcasm. Such was the power of the simple, rather than the complex, to convert and to subvert.

Alongside the lack of a strong female lead, the opera suffered from the fundamental implausibility of the opening scene, in which Aleksey performs an arioso while disentangling from airplane wreckage, and the "documentalism" of the surgery scene. Once the score was composed, Prokofiev refused—more from exhaustion than stubbornness—to alter either the text or the music. Myaskovsky's prediction came to pass, though instead of being perceived as a "joke" by the Committee on Arts Affairs, *A Story of a Real Man* was perceived as an insult. It is clear that even a revised version of the opera would have been panned. Prokofiev remained committed to a genre that other prominent composers abandoned, for they discerned, as he did not, that attempts to fulfill the guidelines of the

Resolution would not succeed in the near future, and perhaps not even in the long term. Soviet music was not thriving (as officialdom proclaimed), but withering.

For this reason, perhaps, Prokofiev both expressed high hopes for the success of *A Story of a Real Man* and prepared for its failure. Mere days after he announced that he had begun work on a topical opera about the “boundless courage” of “Soviet man,” he began to scout for a backup project.⁸⁹ Recalling the grim lessons of *Semyon Kotko* and *The Duenna*, the latter a thematic riposte to the former, he decided to compose both a serious and comic score at the same time. The strategic retreat into humor, in short, would begin before the battle over his newest didactic opera was even waged.

Distant Seas

As discussed earlier, Prokofiev respectively conceived and evaluated two folklore-based projects in the immediate postwar period, drafting a libretto and sketches for *Khan Buzay*, and communicating with Demchinsky's impecunious widow about the scenario for a film about a Palekh craftsmen guild. The Muradeli affair, however, made him uneasy about the Eastern trope, even in its comic guise, and his interest in the film was half-hearted. Seeking benign fare, he thought about writing for the film *Spring* (*Vesna*), a trifling musical comedy about a female scientist, Irina, and her look-alike, the prima ballerina Vera. The plot is self-reflexive: a Moscow studio decides to make a biographical film about the scientist and hires the ballerina to play the lead role, the result being a series of mix-ups involving mistaken identities. Prokofiev was intrigued by the film-within-a-film structure of *Spring* but, after much pondering, decided against the project. The director, Grigoriy Aleksandrov (Mormonenko), instead enlisted a previous co-collaborator, the tunesmith Dunayevsky, for the task.

Prokofiev perhaps sensed that *Spring* would be panned, and indeed, when Mosfilm released it, critics charged that it was merely a pastiche of Aleksandrov and Dunayevsky's previous musical comedies, which included *The Carefree Lads* (*Vesyoliye rebyata*, 1934), *Circus* (*Tsirk*, 1936), and *Volga-Volga* (1938). “The copy appeared to be poorer than the original,” Tatiana Egorova writes of *Spring* and *Volga-Volga*, “and less successful artistically.”⁹⁰ Had Prokofiev taken on *Spring*, it might have fared better artistically, though it remains unclear whether his reduced political standing would have dampened its reception.

He next considered composing a comic opera on the subject of a play titled *Taymır Calls You* (*Vas vızıvayet Taymır*, 1948), which was co-authored by Konstantin Isayev and Aleksandr Galich (Ginzburg). A situation comedy set in a Moscow hotel room, it concerns a geologist who is summoned from time to time by telephone for an excursion to Taymır (a Russian territory situated above the Arctic Circle), the director of an orchestra, an apiarist, his granddaughter (an aspiring singer), and a lovestruck youth. Through a wittily irrational series of events, these characters end up assuming one another's identities. Prokofiev's interest in *Taymır Calls You* did not last long: he abandoned it a few days after Mira drafted the outline of a libretto.⁹¹

Continuing to vacillate, Prokofiev next came up with the Brechtian idea of merging comic opera and vaudeville. For the source text of the experiment, he settled on the play *The Honeymoon* (*Svadebnoye puteshestviye*, 1942) by the satirist Vladimir Dikhovichniy.⁹² The comedy also went by the name *Sladebnoye puteshestviye*, a one-letter misspelling that suggests a wedding (*svad'ba*) where the bride cannot manage her groom (*s nim sladu net*). The plot concerns amorous intrigue between graduate students of the marine sciences, and features episodes of drunkenness, mistaken identities, and bad cooking. Like other Soviet stage works about marriage, it takes the stance that happy couples pursue happy careers. To enhance this sentiment, which no doubt appealed to Prokofiev and Mira, they chose to expand and enrich the courtship scenes. They also decided to vary the time and place of the action. Dikhovichniy confined the seven scenes of his text to a dorm room and apartment in Leningrad. Prokofiev and Mira trimmed the number of scenes to six, setting the last three in a dacha, a train station, and an Eastern port.

Before starting the libretto, Prokofiev and Mira read up on the oceanic sciences, listing, for example, the types of research pursued by hydrologists and the prevailing conditions in the Sea of Okhotsk (located between the Kamchatka Peninsula and the Kurile Islands in the western Pacific Ocean). They noted that the "very dark" waters concealed oil reserves (especially off the northeastern coast of Sakhalin Island), and an abundance of salmon and herring. Prokofiev took note of the types of creatures that inhabit depths above and below 100 meters and wondered how benthic species survive under all the pressure.⁹³

The plot addresses gender politics, with the female characters, true to Russian tradition, proving superior to the males in all matters of the heart

and mind. Scene 1 introduces us to three graduate students: the biologist Kostik (tenor), the hydrologist Mark (bass), and the geologist Andrey (baritone), who together hope to join a research expedition in the Sea of Okhotsk. Mark and Andrey fret that Kostik is romantically involved with Zoya (soprano), the daughter of Professor Sinelnikov (bass), a distinguished oceanographer, and they determine that, for the sake of his career, they must alert him to the perils of marriage. They hatch a ludicrous plot: Andrey will pretend to court Zoya, wooing her with heartfelt poetry readings, and Mark will tearfully report that, during a recent trip abroad, he impulsively married a woman he had only just met. To complicate matters further, they take advantage of an invitation to the Professor's apartment to convince him that Kostik is unworthy of his daughter's hand: he drinks to excess, has to make alimony payments, and, worst of all, loses his temper during chess.

Nothing, of course, goes according to plan. Mark confesses that he married in error, but when the soprano actress (Nastenska) hired to play the part of his wife arrives at his door, she charms him with her domestic skills and fine manners, and he falls head over heels for her. Andrey feigns affection for Zoya, but he also falls in love. The Professor, meanwhile, receives an order to command the expedition to the Sea of Okhotsk, but refuses to add the lads to his crew, since they have behaved so foolishly in his presence. The three budding Jacques Cousteaus are crushed. The crisis is revolved through the intervention of the navigator, Olga Atamenko (mezzo-soprano), who, unbeknownst to Andrey and Mark, had eloped with Kostik a month before. She implores the Professor to take them all on his trip; against his better judgment, he agrees. The last scene, set on the deck of the research vessel *Ocean*, brings the three couples together. Each have a hand in preparing a meal, but they botch the recipe, and the Professor good-naturedly teases them for grossly oversalting his salad. The anchor is raised, and the Professor, looking to the horizon, declares: "Now, young men, to work: show me that you are true sons of the people."⁹⁴

Though its subject is slight, recalling, at its headiest moments, the social and sexual mores (and partner swapping) of Nikolay Chernishevsky's 1863 novel *What Is to Be Done?* and the ambiance of Jack London's Aleutian Island tales, Prokofiev needed official approval to move forward with it. To this end, he wrote the Committee on Arts Affairs in hopes of securing a contract. His terse letter reveals just how far his musical standing and

self-confidence had fallen in the wake of the anti-formalist campaign. The new score, Prokofiev assures Chairman Lebedev, would depict the hopes and dreams of Soviet youth in all their glory. He then lists the six “tasks” that he and Mira had assigned themselves in order to ensure the opera’s public appeal and Party-mindedness:

1. Emphasize the ideological component [of the source text] and show the goal directedness and high-mindedness of our youth.
2. Strengthen the lyric line. We wish to call the opera a lyric comedy, not simply a comedy.
3. Replace the fragmented conversations with arias, songs, and ensembles.
4. Represent the characters’ personalities as clearly as possible.
5. Change several places of action for more varied décor.
6. Reduce the number of scenes from seven to six or five and find another name for the opera.⁹⁵

Prokofiev received an agreement-in-principle from the Committee for a production of the opera in 1952. In late July and August of 1948, he came up with six double-sided pages of sketches, drafted the first scene, and, with Mira, wrote and rewrote portions of the libretto. Fulfilling the requirements of point 6 in his letter to Lebedev, he christened the opera *Distant Seas*. On August 31, he halted work on the opera in order to attend to *A Story of a Real Man* and a new ballet, *The Tale of the Stone Flower*.

Owing to problems with these other two scores, Prokofiev would forget about *Distant Seas* until the start of 1952, at which point he looked over the drafts and, satisfied with them, decided to return to it. Since the deadline for the opera had passed, he was forced to petition the authorities for an extension. His request was bounced from the Theater Directorate (Glavnoye upravleniye muzikal’nikh teatrov) to the Union of Soviet Composers, whose secretary, Kabalevsky, advised him that, in order “to continue work on the opera,” he needed the personal blessing of Nikolay Bespalov, who in late April 1951 had replaced the inefficient Lebedev as chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs.⁹⁶

Prokofiev heeded the advice. He sent a letter to Bespalov that detailed his health troubles, his reduced work schedule, and the pleasure he felt writing music on contemporary subjects. Turning to *Distant Seas*, he made the following plea for patience:

I am planning to renew work on the opera *Distant Seas*, which was curtailed owing to illness and the writing of two compositions on the pressing concerns of our present day. I implore you, highly esteemed Nikolay Nikolayevich, to assist me in this matter by giving me permission to prolong the agreement for writing the music and libretto of the opera *Distant Seas* until June or July 1953.⁹⁷

Prokofiev defers to Bespalov like a courtier to a king. The language of the letter, however, does not reflect the full nature of the relationship between the composer and the bureaucrat. By 1952, Prokofiev had regained stature in official circles, as evidenced by Bespalov's effort, in the spring of that year, to secure Prokofiev a pension to supplement his reduced earnings from royalties. The pension—reduced after Central Committee review from 3,000 to 2,000 rubles a month—was awarded to him less on account of his health troubles than his celebrity status. Bespalov likewise granted an extension for *Distant Seas*, but the composer died before he could complete it.

What remains from the summer of 1948 is a pleasant first scene. It includes a flute solo derived from the opening of *Romeo and Juliet*, a sentimental arioso about lost youth, a vaudevillian “bit” about three drunkards, and a mock minuet.⁹⁸ The chordal writing involves quick-change effects. In the brief (thirty-eight-measure) instrumental prelude, a rising sequence of first-inversion major triads, each a half step apart, quickly bridges the tonic and dominant of E major. The verbal refrain of Kostik's arioso, “If only I were there!” (Tol'ko bi popast'!), conflates the pitches G-sharp and G-natural. The cross-relation is symbolic of Kostik's conflicted desires: will his career survive his marriage? Should he have heeded the advice of his buddies and remained a bachelor? The punch line of the drunkard anecdote, lastly, moves us from E-flat major to C minor through passing chords built on the pitches B-natural (the augmented fifth of E-flat major) and G-sharp (the augmented fifth of C minor).

Prokofiev planned to repeat the flute solo, which he associated with youthful reverie, in discrete variations throughout the opera, thus bringing together the sober and silly passages. Much as in Part I, scene 2 of *War and Peace*, he intended to organize Andrey and Zoya's love scene with waltz strains. These would have accompanied Andrey's recitation of “revolutionary” poems by Aleksandr Blok and Vladimir Mayakovsky, and would have continued through the next episode, in which Zoya implores her father to

take the three lads on his expedition. For the scene at the Leningrad train station, Prokofiev planned to assign the first half of a duet to Nastenka and Zoya, and the second half to Andrey and Mark. To prevent the stage action from getting bogged down in the number format, the two couples would have alternated sitting on a bench in the waiting area, eavesdropping on each other from different hiding places. The two women feel free to express their emotions; the men do not. Embarrassed to admit to each other that they have fallen in love, they duck in turn behind a large potted plant to disclose their feelings directly to the audience.

Distant Seas finds Prokofiev backing into a world of libidinal adolescent caprice. Excluding the fact of its incompletion, nothing in the score speaks to the fraught circumstances of its conception. Vaudeville became for Prokofiev the ideal genre for authoritarian culture since within it the high and low could be crammed together without risk of censure. Forced in word and deed to tame his own creative instincts, he embraced a genre defined by pleasant banality. The three students are sentimental, the three drunkards besotted, and then vice versa. Had the work been finished, and had it survived into more rational times, the whole edifice might have been read as an exercise in high-seas escapism or, like *The Love for Three Oranges*, auto-parody. *Distant Seas* has no hidden meanings: its only subtext is the absence of a subtext.

The extant music is discussed in a short essay by L. V. Polyakova in the March 1963 issue of *Sovetskaya muzika*. Even in the wake of the Khrushchev Thaw, ideological constraints prevented the author from making the basic point that Prokofiev took to vaudeville because of—rather than in spite of—its frivolity. Polyakova was also unable to address the anxiety and distress felt by Prokofiev in 1948. But she tried to: in the uncensored typescript of her essay, which is housed at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, she muses that Prokofiev would have finished *Distant Seas* “had it not been for the crushing blow brought on him by the tragic events of the last months of 1948.” “One is hard pressed,” she adds, “to find in the entire epoch of Stalin’s ‘cult of personality,’ and the entire history of Soviet music, a more scandalous instance of reprisal against a composer!”⁹⁹ The editors of *Sovetskaya muzika* deleted these lines, replacing them with the altogether false claim that “doubts about the suitability of the chosen text eventually convinced [the composer] not to write the opera.”¹⁰⁰ For Prokofiev, the end of 1948 proved almost as traumatic as the beginning. He stopped work on *Distant Seas*, but he clearly sought to return to it.

Denunciation

Unsurprisingly, Prokofiev was further exhausted by the simultaneous labor in 1948 on a new opera and a new ballet (the aforementioned *Tale of a Stone Flower*), along with the preparations for the run-through of *A Story of a Real Man* and the relaunch of Part II of *War and Peace*, but he refused to curtail his activities. His work, ever his reason for being, now provided him shelter from the grimness of the outside world, even if, on a heightened allegorical level, it embodied this grimness. Ignoring his unstable health, he soldiered on, seeking both to honor his muse and appease cultural bureaucrats and ideologues. The pointlessness of the latter quest became obvious to him in December, when he once again came under attack. The attack stemmed from his supposed refusal to abide by the demands of the Resolution and the meetings that had followed from it, even though, by any rational standard of measurement, he had more than done so. The hostile denunciation of *A Story of a Real Man* left his creative life as debilitated as his personal one.

Mira reports that on May 25 the conductor Khaykin, the theater director Shlepyanov, and the violinist Dmitriy Tsiganov all gathered in Nikolina Gora to hear Prokofiev play and sing through *A Story of a Real Man*.¹⁰¹ Trying to convince Khaykin of the sincerity of his intentions, Prokofiev looked at him in the eye and said: "I wrote this opera with my heart's blood."¹⁰² Khaykin appeared to be delighted with the score, and offered to present it to the Committee on Arts Affairs, the hope being that the Committee would approve the minimal funding required for a staging at the Kirov Theater in Leningrad. Five days later, Khaykin relayed that the theater had received permission to begin work on the opera by the Committee chairman, Lebedev, with the question of payment for décor and costumes to be decided after a closed-door concert performance. Clinging to a modicum of optimism, Prokofiev asked Lamm to begin the orchestration. In September, however, the Union of Soviet Composers requested a copy of the libretto for internal review—a turn of events that galled the composer, since it signaled that the opera would be judged on its thematic content alone. Khrennikov could order changes before a single melody had been heard. The Union also requested that, following the review, the composer travel to Moscow to familiarize the membership with the music, a journey his doctors prohibited. Upon hearing the news, Khaykin pointed out that the Union's meddling was "senseless and illogical" and should be

altogether ignored.¹⁰³ The libretto, he declared, would be assessed alongside the music by “responsible people” at the closed-door run-through in Leningrad. “If on this occasion the question of alterations arises, then we will be able to reach an agreement much more quickly. If we need to give not one but two closed performances, or need to repeat something, this will all be possible.”

The run-through of *A Story of a Real Man* took place on the morning of December 3. Far from mollifying his critics with his topical subject matter, recycled folksongs, and hospital patient dances, Prokofiev endured a storm of derision, thus assuring that the opera would not be staged in his lifetime (the Moscow premiere took place in 1960 at the Bolshoy Theater, the Leningrad premiere in 1967 at the opera studio of the Conservatory). The rehearsals went very badly, since the singers had not learned their parts in advance and seemed distracted and unmotivated. The performance itself was by all accounts a fiasco; Prokofiev protested to Samosud that “I listened and didn’t recognize my own music! . . . They didn’t play my music!”¹⁰⁴ The available evidence indicates that the post-performance assessment of the score was scripted, planned in advance by the composer’s opponents. Olga Lamm speculates that a “directive intentionally targeting Prokofiev came ‘from above.’”¹⁰⁵ Mira writes that during the entr’acte Shlepyanov walked over to her seat and said, “Prepare yourself, there’s going to be thunder.”¹⁰⁶ The list of attendees included many of the surviving members of the artistic intelligentsia, thus ensuring that the criticism of the score would send a message across the disciplines. Mira recalls seeing the ballerina Nataliya Dudinskaya, the *Cinderella* choreographers Rostislav Zakharov and Konstantin Sergeyev, the conductor Mravinsky, and the composers Yuriy Kochurov, Vasiliy Solovyov-Sedoy, Oles (Aleksandr) Chishko, and Boris Arapov, who had, like Shostakovich, lost his post at the Leningrad Conservatory after the February 1948 scandal. The other locals and visitors at the event included the conformist writer Lev Nikulin and Maresyev, the real-life fighter ace whose near-fatal wounding, convalescence, and heroism Prokofiev’s opera monumentalized. Looking around the audience, Mira wondered “Who’s arranged all this, and why?”

Suffering a splitting headache, Prokofiev left the theater before the post-performance assessment. Mira remained with pencil and notepad, and recorded that all but one of the speakers who mounted the podium denounced the score. (The lone backer was Solovyov-Sedoy, a popular song composer

who, in his speech, professed his lifelong love for Prokofiev's music.) Pavel Serebryakov, the director of the Leningrad Conservatory, set the ominous tone by branding the opera a "parody" lacking both "Russianness and feeling." The baritone Sergey Levik hastened to add that *A Story of a Real Man* and Prokofiev's comic opera *The Duenna* were "one and the same thing": a study in the "grotesque" tending "toward mockery." The score was characterized by "an absence of heroic images, an absence of characterization, and an ugly musical text." The musicologist Leonid Entelis branded the score a "defiled" and "wretched" contrivance expressing "neither truth nor heroism." The opera represented the "liquidation of music." "Prokofiev is no longer," Entelis added with seeming delight. "Prokofiev is finished!" The exceedingly ill-tempered composer Koval, an architect (with Khrennikov and Vladimir Zakharov) of the anti-formalist campaign, accused Prokofiev of a "deterioration of sonorousness" in his orchestration and "second-" perhaps even "third-rate" vocal writing. *A Story of a Real Man* attested to "the composer's unwillingness" to renounce his modernist tendencies and the Kirov Theater's "inadequate understanding of the [1948] Resolution."

There followed an act of personal betrayal. To Mira's dismay, Khaykin, who had advised and helped Prokofiev on the opera, revealed that, two days before the run-through, he had written to the Committee on Arts Affairs with a "forewarning" about the opera's various failings. Shocked that Khaykin had not voiced his concerns to Prokofiev and had disingenuously cast himself as the nervous composer's backer, Mira rose to speak. She described the pain she felt on Prokofiev's behalf and refuted the charge that he "had knowingly avoided writing what was required, that he did not want to reform" his style. The audience had no idea "how much effort Seryozha put into the opera, how he had tried to devise a new musical language that was accessible and close to the people." Unlike other composers hoping to return to official favor, Prokofiev did not "take the easy way out and write music for the cinema" but sought to respond to the "honorable and responsible challenge of writing an opera on a contemporary theme."

Mira held no sway. Following the orchestrated, fraudulent assessment of the performance, she returned to the Astoria Hotel and told Prokofiev what had happened. As he listened, he repeated "I just don't understand" over and over again. These words speak volumes about the earnestness of his aspiration to appease his antagonists. He had adhered to official doctrine in his topical opera, but had sought to elevate its crude precepts into art. This Pushkinian model of transcendence combined in his thinking with a

model borrowed from Christian Science: the unreal circumstances in which he found himself could be transcended because they are unreal. On December 3, 1948, however, Prokofiev came to understand that he could not artistically overcome what could not be defined. The cultural climate was such that, no matter how earnest his attempt to honor Marxist-Leninist ideals, to represent them in the most glowing light, the attempt would always miss the target because the target did not exist. Socialist Realism, like formalism, had no concrete definition. It meant whatever officialdom wanted it to mean.

Kabalevsky telephoned Prokofiev after the run-through to offer his condolences, as did Mravinsky, who also commended Mira for defending *A Story of a Real Man*. Kukharsky, who had advised Prokofiev to compose the opera but then suffered cold feet about it, stopped by to inform him that the scandal was unwanted and criticized Khaykin for sending his letter to the Committee on Arts Affairs too late for the opera to be overhauled. Prokofiev accused Khaykin of inviting an antagonistic audience to the run-through; despite the conductor's claims to the contrary, Prokofiev held a grudge against him for the rest of his life.¹⁰⁷

The composer was likewise betrayed by Kukharsky, who responded to the run-through by writing a harsh essay about Prokofiev's operatic methods. The essay, which appeared in the January 13, 1949, issue of *Izvestiya*, trotted out a familiar catalog of unspecific complaints about Prokofiev's supposed formalism, defined in this instance as "extremely pale, anti-melodic" syntax dependent on "unexpressive recitative" to amplify a "bad libretto."¹⁰⁸ Whereas "an authentic artist of our times would have found in B. Polevoy's story wonderful material for the creation of truthful and wonderful musical images of the remarkable Soviet people," Kukharsky expounded, "Prokofiev interpreted *A Story of a Real Man* from the discredited perspectives of Western Modernism." The result was an opera that replaced "real people" with "theatrical masks, spiritually vacuous personages with extremely primitive thoughts and feelings." The opera's weaknesses stemmed from the composer's "detachment from life" and his "armchair expert" approach to composition.

Since it would not have been helpful, from the perspective of political tutelage, to critique Prokofiev's opera without comparing it to other patriotic scores, Kukharsky in the final paragraphs of his essay trained his ideological lens on Dzerzhinsky's 1947 folk opera *The Prince Lake*, noting that its maker evinced only a "shallow knowledge" of his subject matter (this perhaps highlighting deficiencies in orchestration and voice-leading that had been ignored in the euphoric reviews of Dzerzhinsky's *The Quiet Don*). On the plus side,

Kukharsky drew attention to the young Armenian composer Aleksandr Harutyunyan's 1948 *Cantata About the Motherland*, a "talented, bright composition, suffused with the spirit of Soviet patriotism." The scenario featured "images of Soviet people raised in an atmosphere of inspiring creative labor, in the heroism and pathos of the struggle for Communism."

Like the affirmations of the Resolution published in *Kul'tura i zhizn'*, *Literaturnaya gazeta*, and *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* in early 1949, Kukharsky's *Izvestiya* article stemmed from a speech delivered at a special year-end meeting of the Union of Soviet Composers. During this event, held between December 21 and 29, 1948, Khrennikov, the newly minted General Secretary, cemented his authority. He arranged trial hearings of some 150 new works, and scheduled lectures by 27 composers and musicologists, who agonized in unison about the harm inflicted upon Soviet music by Western trends. Eminent artists—those who had benefited from Muzfond's munificence—were again petitioned to apologize, while an array of lesser talents from far-flung points in the empire basked in praise. The speeches bore the paradoxical distinction of being indistinct from each other: each touched on the inability of first-tier composers to rehabilitate themselves and the regrettable regression of second-tier composers from paragons of progress to recyclers. In the topsy-turvy post-Resolution period, sophisticated compositions were judged emotionally and psychologically primitive while unsophisticated ones were lauded as profound. Khrennikov closed the session with a prepared statement about the comradeship and conviviality shown in the talks.

Prokofiev was invited to the gathering, but remained too frail to attend, and thus managed to avoid another dressing down. He excused himself in a December 21 note to Khrennikov: "Dear Tikhon Nikolayevich: I came from the countryside to Moscow for the plenary but, not feeling well, I had to be confined to bed. I hope that I will soon recover and be able to participate in the work of the plenary."¹⁰⁹ On December 27, Prokofiev made a brief appearance at the gathering to have his photograph taken with Khrennikov; on December 28, he needed to stay home, but submitted a formal letter to the gathering that further outlined his views on the Resolution. As in his earlier apology, he invoked Chaikovsky, but this time with the aim of illustrating the differences, rather than the similarities, between their approaches to opera. The letter was read aloud in his absence:

Comrade Zhdanov advised us to consult the Russian Classics. The guidance is important, offering a bearing for

a composer in his work. However, composing a Soviet opera presents us with a series of difficulties. Let us take for example one of the principal personages of the opera—the people. Chaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov concerned themselves with the people of the tsarist period. Our free Soviet people are a wholly different entity. In this respect it becomes obvious that the entire choral section of the opera must be composed in a totally different manner, one that still has to be found. I have often faced this problem. But I reasoned that the search is necessary, and if it is unsuccessful in the first opera, then it might turn out better in the next opera or the one after that.

In my opera I tried to be as melodic as I could, tried to make the melodies as comprehensible as possible. In representing my characters I was primarily concerned with disclosing Soviet man's internal world, his love for the Motherland, and Soviet patriotism. It was hard for me to hear the negative reactions of my comrades. I would nonetheless prefer, however, to write an opera on Soviet themes and even, in the event of failure, to listen to negative reactions—than not to write and not to listen.¹¹⁰

The letter is rhetorical rather than substantive, but it bears a hint of defiance: it is better to compose and be critiqued than not to compose at all. Prokofiev would not be silenced.

War and Peace (Part II)

There is no mention in Prokofiev's letter, and little mention at the plenary session, of the other opera auditioned in Leningrad during the month. On December 4, Part II of *War and Peace*, stripped of the elements that raised hackles in July and October 1947, received a rehearing at Malegot under the direction of Isay Sherman. (Prokofiev made the alterations following a resumption of negotiations about the score at the offices of the Committee on Arts Affairs.) In a peculiar reversal of fortunes, the unadorned concert performance, which occurred less than twenty-four hours after the catastrophe at the Kirov Theater with *A Story of a Real Man*, proved a modest success. Although the absence of decor and costumes "diminished the

impression,” the atmosphere in the hall was congenial. “Finally, after long months of anticipation,” Mira wrote,

I heard the following scenes: Napoleon at Shevardino Redoubt, Fili (with Kutuzov’s new aria, so broadly Russian), Natasha’s meeting with the wounded Andrey in Mitishchi (during which I noticed tears in Seryozha’s eyes), the Smolensk Road with a new ending that sounded much more impressive than the previous one. The Moscow scene [Moscow Aflame] wasn’t done, since in the event of a staging they are planning to cut it.¹¹¹

Mira does not specify who “they” were, but from the protocol of the discussion that followed the run-through, it emerges that the ideological sanitization of the opera stemmed as much from the Theater Directorate as the Committee on Arts Affairs. Mira reproduces the protocol in her memoirs, helpfully pointing out places where the record of the discussion deviates from her recollections.¹¹²

One such deviation is in the transcript of the musicologist Mikhaíl Glukh’s reaction to Part II, in which he grumbles about the occasional blandness of the melodic writing for Kutuzov and Pierre, and the “impersonal construction” of Andrey’s death scene. Like a latter-day Artusi inveighing against a Monteverdi, Glukh takes Prokofiev to task for his aberrant handling of dissonances (according to music theory textbooks); he also decries the coarseness of the jargon inserted into the scene 8 partisans’ chorus—lines like “The black enemy will die... We’ll leave neither hide nor hair; we’ll rattle him like bones in a sack. We’ll squash him like a flea; we’ll crush him like a clove of garlic.” Excluded from the transcript, according to Mira, is Glukh’s praise of Prokofiev’s lyrical writing. The transcript includes mention of a “series of positive lyrical passages,” but omits Glukh’s use of the adjective “ingenious” to describe them.

A second instance concerns the speech by Shaporin on the need to reconfigure the opera so that Part I, “Peace,” and Part II, “War,” could be performed in a single evening. Shaporin makes the reasonable point that, whereas Part I stands alone, Part II does not, especially when heard without the “Moscow Aflame” episode and the mass choruses, as was the case at Malegot. Shaporin advocates abbreviating the opera and revamping the vocal parts so that each scene evinces the beauty and pathos of the Part I

ball scene, where Natasha and Andrey become smitten with each other, and the Part II death scene, which teems with hallucinatory waltz strains. He likewise calls for additional development of the “love angle” and greater elucidation of the characters’ internal experiences. Mira comments here that the transcript excludes Shaporin’s flattering comparison of *War and Peace* to Chaikovsky’s *Queen of Spades*, which implied that, once banged into shape, Prokofiev’s opera was destined for immortalization as a Russian—or Soviet—classic. Prokofiev concluded that this would happen only when each member of the Union had critiqued the score and it had been reworked to the point of non-recognition. In his “brief diary” (*kratkiy dnevniki*) of August 1952 to March 1953, he encapsulates the endless demands for changes in a single word: “disgusting.”¹¹³

Given that Mira’s memoirs fluctuate between hagiographic narration and dutifully researched chronicle, her corrections to the *War and Peace* protocol may or may not be accurate. One cannot help but note her careful adjustment of the opening of Kabalevsky’s speech. In the transcript, he begins: “I didn’t stay yesterday at the Kirov Theater for the assessment [of *A Story of a Real Man*] and did not speak out, since it was a day of great sorrow. I love S. S. Prokofiev very much and grieved this failure of his.” Mira corrects the record to read: “I didn’t stay for the assessment and did not appear yesterday because I was unable to speak positively about [*A Story of a Real Man*], and it is difficult for [me] to speak negatively, since [I] love Prokofiev very much and find personal delight in each of his successes and personal sorrow in each of his failures.”¹¹⁴ The transcript of the remainder of the speech, in which Kabalevsky echoes Shaporin’s argument for reconfiguring *War and Peace* as a single-evening event, is, according to Mira, accurate.

Her appraisal of later events in the opera’s sorrowful history finds support in the recollections of Valerian Bogdanov-Berezovsky, Samosud, and Prokofiev himself. Mira omits mention, however, of what occurred on December 5, two days after the abbreviated run-through of Part II. Dutifully heeding the counsel of the Committee on Arts Affairs, Prokofiev devised a new plan for the opera, one that excised not only “Moscow Aflame,” but also “Napoleon at Shevardino Redoubt,” the “Epigraph” of Part I, and scene 7, “Pierre Bezukhov’s Study.” Samosud comments that the plan also included provisions for trimming “the overture,” “scenes four (at Hélène’s) and five (at Dolokhov’s), and even the tenth (Fili)”;¹¹⁵ he adds that Prokofiev’s “desire to see *War and Peace* onstage” was “so persistent, so unshakable, that he was actually willing to cede to all manner of editorial modifications, abbreviations, and

cuts if only it made it to theater.”¹¹⁵ The tinkering lasted much longer than either Prokofiev or Samosud could have reasonably anticipated.

Khrennikov

On December 30, the penultimate day of a nightmarish year, Prokofiev was once again summoned to the Union of Soviet Composers, this time for a face-to-face meeting with Khrennikov to discuss the defects in *A Story of a Real Man* and the fallout over the run-through.¹¹⁶ Mira attended in his place, a now familiar ritual. During the meeting, she recalls, Khrennikov hailed Prokofiev as a “titan” and “colossus” among composers and dismissed Koval’s invective about his “fall in mastery” as nonsense. Khrennikov’s mood then soured, and he began to interrogate Mira about the choice of Polevoy’s novel for an opera, rattling off a list of other topical novels and plays that might have been set. If Prokofiev hoped to write music about Soviet pilots, Khrennikov continued, he should have ventured out to an aerodrome to witness how the pilots worked and listened to their jargon. Mira countered that Prokofiev had tried his best with *A Story of a Real Man*, but that he was in no physical condition to conduct field research about aviation; his doctors forbade him to travel, even to make telephone calls.

At this point, Mira continues, Khrennikov abruptly changed the subject, asking her: “Why do you try to write librettos? You must know that you are very bad at it.” Mira replied that she encouraged Prokofiev to collaborate with others on his librettos, but he always refused, preferring to write them with her at the same time as the music. She added in her own defense that, unlike the libretto for *A Story of a Real Man*, the libretto for *War and Peace* Part 2 had been well received. “Do you think so?” Khrennikov responded, “I don’t find this to be the case.”

Recalling how humiliated she felt, Mira did not suppress her disdain for the General Secretary. “Seryozha might be a ‘titan’ and ‘colossus,’” she fumed,

but Khrennikov will do all he can to ensure that his operas are not made available to the theaters and the people, and will defend Soviet music from Prokofiev, the “titan” and “colossus.” He hated *Semyon Kotko*, and now he hates *War and Peace* and *A Story [of a Real Man]*. He will do all he can out of envy to guard the theaters and audiences from Prokofiev’s harmful influence. And now he has the full

power to do this—his opinion is regarded by theaters, publishers, and music critics as directive.

Mira's candid remarks, a departure from the banal Soviet-speak of earlier sections of the memoirs, end with a bitter insight: "Sincerity is a good thing." Khrennikov's "sincerity," however, "bore a shade of malice."¹¹⁷

Khrennikov's "malice"—his purported ill-treatment of his colleagues—and the entire series of events in 1948 traumatized the Soviet musical elite. Olga Lamm believes that the Zhdanovshchina, the nickname given to these events by musicologists, hastened the death not only of Prokofiev but also of Asafyev (who died on January 27, 1949), Myaskovsky (August 8, 1950), and Lamm (May 5, 1951). Shebalin, moreover, suffered a debilitating stroke in 1949.¹¹⁸ Of these figures, only Asafyev can be regarded as an agent in his own demise, since he consciously cooperated with the regime. A fragile, nervous person, Asafyev succumbed to pressure from above to abandon his provocative journalism and academic writing for Party-line composition, the result being a series of derivative scores on standard fare themes. His composer colleagues damned his efforts with faint praise, and even though he heard his works performed, he wept over his loss of intellectual prestige. Prokofiev scorned him, in public and private, for his 1932 French Revolution ballet *The Flame of Paris*, since it absorbed, without the slightest alteration or reworking, songs by French composers of the period that Prokofiev had gathered for him in Paris. Lamm comments that on the night of the ballet's premiere Prokofiev tore into Asafyev, telling him: "After such blatant plagiarism, they won't allow you into Paris."¹¹⁹ Prokofiev provides a different version of this episode in an autobiographical notation: "After *The Flame of Paris*, I said to Asafyev that when he comes to Paris, the Société des Auteurs will tell him to leave his suitcases at the station."¹²⁰ It testifies to Prokofiev's uncommon ethics, which placed more value on creative integrity than personal integrity, that their friendship was spoiled more by Asafyev's artistic betrayal than his political betrayal.

Upon learning in May 1948 that Asafyev had suffered a serious stroke, Prokofiev nonetheless came to his side. During later visits, the two discussed religion and reminisced about their comparatively paradisiacal conservatory days. According to a family intimate, Asafyev was guilt-stricken about his creative and political hackwork and, "before his death, summoned a priest."¹²¹ He confessed his moral lapses to Prokofiev and Lamm, who both forgave him. They perhaps did not know that, on December 16, he had

drafted a pathetic letter to Zhdanov in which he asserted, after describing his failing health, that the Resolution and its consequences were fair and just:

I consider it my duty to convey to you in a proper manner several modest thoughts in connection with the news I received about the congress you led on the subject of our native music. Unfortunately, I was unable to appear in person. On May 14 last year I suffered a cruel misfortune: a brain seizure and loss of the use of my left arm and leg. This nagging condition was precipitated by high blood pressure, which dates from the days of the Leningrad Blockade, and of which I became acutely aware after January 1947. Yet I was compelled to complete my ballet on the theme of partisan Yugoslavians: *Malitsa*....

Permit me to thank you for the powerful and intelligent words, in particular for your wonderful assessment of the value of the music of our Russian Classics, the music of our great people. I have come to believe that a new era will dawn in contemporary Russian music and that everything within it will be wholesome, expressed in a natural way, simple and beautiful. The tradition that extends from Glinka to the glorious masters of the Balakirev-Stasov circle (the new Russian school) and further to the great Chaikovsky (who used his talent and mastery of form to instill music in the hearts of the vast majority) will once again infuse our operas and symphonies with the strains of happy song.¹²²

Owing, perhaps, to his failing health, Asafyev did not realize that he had written the letter in vain. Zhdanov had died four months earlier, on August 31, 1948.

Seeing the collapse of Asafyev's condition, Prokofiev and Lamm forgave him for serving Zhdanov. Myaskovsky did not. After the release of the Resolution he refused on principle to speak to Asafyev and, owing to his own failing health (Myaskovsky was diagnosed with cancer in the spring of 1948), did not attend his funeral. He marked the event in his diary with cool dismissal: "Today B. V. Asafyev died. There was an entire epoch in his life. I hardly saw him these past two or three years."¹²³

The mere fact that Prokofiev maintained his frenetic work schedule throughout 1948, embarking on a new fairy-tale ballet and persisting with *War and Peace*, attests to his steadfastness and irrepressible creative passion. His fervent desire to commit music to paper perhaps served as an anodyne. The Theater Directorate continued to funnel approved scenarios to him, and he continued to weigh new projects for stage and screen, despite the setbacks of the recent and distant past. He trusted that his health would not completely fail him while his musical imagination still sparked, and he invented musical worlds that he believed merited greater attention than the real world. Mira, herself a fabulist, shielded him as best as she could from external concerns, leaving him to negotiate increased work time with his doctors. Life, as Eisenstein had put it in 1946, was essentially over, but there still remained the postscript.

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Affirmation, 1949–1953

Prokofiev's final works composed after the storm of 1948 are characterized by a decline in melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic invention that reflects the parameters of his commissions and the difficulties he had concentrating as his health continued to deteriorate. The period also witnessed increased involvement (for good and for ill) in his creative activities by other musicians. In his final works, Prokofiev's authorial voice fades, and the voices of others, including Atovmyan, Samosud, and especially Rostropovich, threaten to crowd him out. He continued to construct his scores brick by brick from preexisting sketches but relied on interlocutors to provide the mortar. Once a meticulous proofreader, lambasting his hardworking assistants for not respecting his intentions when preparing his scores, he now ceded to their judgment, allowing them to realize his orchestrations based on their general understanding of his methods. He lacked the strength to prepare his manuscripts for completion on his own. Such meddling creates a paradox in his late works: while the syntax simplifies, hewing closer to standard diatonic collections, the scoring thickens to the point that each note becomes masked by several others.

After 1948, Prokofiev could no longer depend on the disgraced, deposed Atovmyan to attend to his business dealings; instead, Atovmyan depended on him, beseeching the composer to accept commission after commission for arrangements and transcriptions of preexisting works, which Atovmyan would then take the lead in bringing to order for performance and publication for a percentage of the fee. Proof comes from their 1949–52 correspondence, which finds Atovmyan encouraging Prokofiev to realize three (initially four)

orchestral suites from *The Tale of the Stone Flower* while also assembling a pair of generic dance suites commissioned by the Radio Committee. The commission for the dance suites dates from 1934 but went unfulfilled until 1950.¹ Evidently Atovmyan convinced the Radio Committee to revive a defunct contract, and then took it upon himself to assemble the dance suites without pausing for breath in his musical workshop. He kept Prokofiev abreast of his progress, but one can only wonder whether the composer was able to follow Atovmyan's tangled questions about arranging, formatting, and transcribing the various interchangeable numbers. Atovmyan's letter of July 11, 1950, with news of a successful premiere, may well have come as a relief, even as it promised to keep the assembly line humming:

Today the Dance Suite with the two new numbers (the Serenade and Minuet) was finally heard. I don't know why S[amuil] A[bramovich] Samosud was nervous about the instrumentation of the Serenade and Minuet. It all sounded wonderful. They performed six numbers: the Serenade, Minuet, Mazurka, Polonaise, and the 2 Pushkin Waltzes. I listened with immense pleasure. Did you hear it on the radio? What was your impression of the performance? Now a new suite has to be done... We'll speak on this subject when we meet.²

The letter offers the unsettling impression of Prokofiev's music being plundered and patched together by an assistant who, out of his own need and newly debased status, does with Prokofiev's dances what, back in 1936, Meyerhold and Tairov were supposed to do with the composer's units of incidental music (assemble them, arrange them into effective dramatic wholes, graft them, put them onto stage so that they sound wonderful), except that here the whole process is driven by the need for income. Prokofiev did not hear the Dance Suite, which was made up of spare parts from *The Duenna* and the ill-fated Pushkin commissions, nor did he sanction the creation of a sequel. Other projects and new compositions took precedence.

The Lower Depths

This is not to say that Prokofiev wanted to discontinue his relationship with Atovmyan. Recognizing that his erstwhile benefactor had been reduced to a hardscrabble existence, Prokofiev continued to involve Atovmyan

in his activities. (Atovmyan did not return to full-time work until 1953, when he became the administrator of the State Symphony Orchestra of Cinematography, holding the position for a decade.) The emotions and tensions in their long-term friendship are evident in their correspondence concerning Prokofiev's 1949 Cello Sonata, which Atovmyan rendered suitable for publication, though not without struggle.

The Cello Sonata was conceived for the twenty-year-old virtuoso Rostropovich, recent first-prize winner of an international festival for young performers in Prague, whom Prokofiev first heard play on December 21, 1947, in the Small Hall of the Moscow Conservatory.³ On that Sunday evening, in a diverse concert dedicated to the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Rostropovich earned the composer's gratitude for performing his long-overlooked First Cello Concerto of 1938 (with a piano reduction of the orchestral score), which he had conceived in Paris for Gregor Pyatigorsky. Prokofiev thereafter pledged to compose something specific to Rostropovich's technique, the result being a productive friendship that extended through the remainder of the composer's life, with Rostropovich even periodically residing at Prokofiev's dacha, sleeping on the second floor. The contact between them must have been authorized, especially since Rostropovich, unlike Prokofiev, was sanctioned to travel abroad. They clearly knew each other before December 21, 1947. On June 8, Rostropovich sent a note to Prokofiev congratulating him on the Stalin Prize for his Violin Sonata while also wishing him "health, long years of life and many cello works."⁴

Prokofiev's initial inclination to rework the first Cello Concerto was set aside in favor of the Cello Sonata, a brand-new score commissioned by the Radio Committee. It was drafted in the spring of 1949 along the lines of Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata, which Rostropovich, being its dedicatee, obviously championed. Prokofiev sent the manuscript to Rostropovich in June with an invitation for him to travel with Atovmyan to Nikolina Gora to play it. The ambitious cellist was delighted to be at the service of the eminent composer; he became Prokofiev's advisor on revisions to the Cello Sonata, encouraging him to push its virtuosic side while ensuring its manageability. In an undated letter to Prokofiev, Rostropovich confirms: "I'm going to Ruza to prepare for my upcoming trip to Germany ('celebration of Bach's 200th'), but I'll be in touch with Moscow the entire time; so if I'm needed to change anything in the cello part I can always come to Moscow." He ends the letter with a plea for another project: "To avoid completely getting on your nerves, I won't ask anything about the Cello Concerto, but in my heart I'm hoping."⁵

Prior to its public unveiling, Rostropovich performed the Cello Sonata three times behind closed doors with Richter at the piano: the first run-through, on September 27, 1949, was for Union of Soviet Composers adjudication; the second, on December 6, highlighted a demonstration of Soviet music at the Union's 1949 plenary session; and the third, on January 12, 1950, was for Radio Committee adjudication. Mira reports that this last demonstration "was a success, but not the kind that the performers, expecting an ovation for Seryozha, had counted on. The mood in the hall was rather constrained."⁶ The Cello Sonata was first performed for the public on March 1, 1950, in a well-received concert at the Moscow Conservatory. Serious illness—requiring hospitalization—prevented the composer from attending.

Prokofiev relies within the score on sonata, minuet and trio, and sonata-rondo forms, and highlights C and F major. But telltale signs of his idiosyncratic approach to harmony and tonality remain. In the opening movement, for example, the second theme group arrives on the dominant by way of a transition in F-sharp major, a tritone removed from C major. The recapitulation begins in the expected tonic but soon strays, and materials from the first and second theme groups are reordered and inverted—procedures that justify the absence of thematic development in the movement's core. The final movement, a quasi-symmetrical sonata-rondo, begins and ends in C major but wanders, as in the opening movement, through wide-ranging and unexpected tonalities. The middle episode offers an ethereal contrast to the upbeat refrain and first episode, which features several brisk themes tumbling one into the next (the order of the themes changes for the third episode). A coda supplants a final statement of the refrain. A version of the first theme of the opening movement returns—a gesture that recalls Prokofiev's Ninth Piano Sonata, whose ending also quotes from its beginning.

In addition to the Ninth Piano Sonata, there are other references in the Cello Sonata to Prokofiev's own works, some explicit, others surfacing like stylistic ciphers. Boris Schwarz notes the obvious similarity between the fourth melody introduced in the first movement (that is, the second melody of the second theme group) and the "Field of the Dead" mezzo-soprano aria in *Alexander Nevsky*, identifying it as an "almost literal quotation."⁷ A more subtle example is the string of exposed rising triads in the center of the innocuous second movement, which recalls a similarly striking moment in the third movement of the 1943 Flute Sonata. The fourteen available pages of sketches for the Cello Sonata are essentially a gathering of melodic and harmonic material that had served Prokofiev well in the past.

Between the time of its first private adjudication and first public performance, Rostropovich entered several changes into the solo part. Atovmyan, having received the desperately needed commission to edit the manuscript and parts for publication with Muzgiz, found himself confronted with a mess. So, too, did Prokofiev, who complained about the state of the manuscript in a June 22, 1950, letter to Atovmyan:

Rostropovich sent me his edit of the Sonata. I don't doubt that his remarks are reasonable, but the copy is blurred and stained. I don't think it's possible to send it to Muzgiz in this state. Besides, none of the changes made to the cello part has been entered into the score (everything has to be entered, except the fingerings). How does the Sonata end? You know, I wanted *two* variants, i.e. *ossia*. Now: if the 1st variant is completely unsuitable, then it's not worth publishing. Let Rostropovich + Richter decide this. I gave (and entrusted to) you an altogether clean and legible copy, and you're sending Muzgiz what? You can't, for example, send it to the engraver with an "8—" (for the cellos): the part has to be written out in the treble clef (or in the bass clef, if it's low).

Unfortunately, I'm unable right now to deal with the corrections and tidying up, so I ask you, as a sufficiently experienced publisher, to put the Sonata into decent shape and send it to Muzgiz. What I hastily inscribed at the keyboard, working with Rostropovich, needs to look tidy.⁸

The criticism stung. "I don't understand why you attacked me," Atovmyan protested a week later.

Instead of giving the Sonata to me (as I had asked him) Slava Rostropovich sent it to you in the state you found it in. But I wanted to put everything in order beforehand—then to send it to you in a final, ready-to-be-engraved state.

Things turned out differently, but absolutely through no fault of my own. I'm working these days on the Sonata—I've entered all the corrections, including the bowings—and copied the coda once again, including as a second line the

second variant (*ossia*—the easier variant), and both the cello and piano parts. As proof I'm sending you the last 5 pages (so that you won't be in doubt). When I was preparing the Sonata for publication it seemed to me that the piano part was missing some phrase marks, but without your permission I didn't put them in. It can easily be done on the proofs.

The dedication wasn't clear to me. After it, was it necessary to include the Gorky quotation, the one that you have on the manuscript ("Man! The word has such a proud ring!")? To be on the safe side, I entered the quote. Today I submitted the manuscript in good condition to Muzgiz. It will go to the engraver at the beginning of July. When it's ready I'll send you the contract. In general, you scolded me for nothing.⁹

The correspondence finds Prokofiev including an optional ending to the Cello Sonata for less-virtuosic performers; it also finds him dedicating the score to Atovmyan, while also including, alongside the dedication, a quotation from Gorky's 1902 play *The Lower Depths* (*Na dne*), an almost grotesquely realistic, unsentimental depiction of destitute ne'er-do-wells in a flophouse in the town of Volga. The character Satin's famous declaration—"Man! The word has such a proud ring!"—underscores what is habitually considered to be the play's central concern with social justice, human equality. In an unfair world that privileges falsehoods over the truth, one can only preserve one's integrity. This, however, is the Stalinist cliché, the cynical rewriting of the play's message after Gorky's death. *The Lower Depths* is in fact highly nihilistic, with the characters slowly coming to terms with the idea that the universe is fundamentally indifferent to their plight. Prokofiev perhaps intended the quotation to comment on Atovmyan's humiliation, perhaps also on his own troubles. Muzgiz, he later learned, did not want to publish the dedication, which only confirmed to him Atovmyan's fall from grace within the cultural agencies. He intervened on his assistant's behalf, and the dedication was preserved—a triumph not for Stalinist bombast ("living has become better, living has become happier"), but for its Panglossian subtexts.

Over time, the affable, roguish Atovmyan rescued himself from the lower depths, improving his standing at Muzgiz and with it his personal finances. In the summer of 1952, he approached Prokofiev about the possibility of

assembling a three-volume collected edition of his piano works, first making sure that the chief editor of Muzgiz, Aleksandr Zhivtsov, approved of the plan and would, if Prokofiev agreed, hire him as the compiler and arranger. On August 13, 1952, Atovmyan forwarded a provisional outline of the edition to Prokofiev; he planned to devote the first volume to sonatas, the second to shorter pieces, and the third to transcriptions and arrangements. Their ensuing exchange is notable for two reasons: first, Prokofiev, having responded with enthusiasm to the prospect of having his piano music gathered together by Muzgiz, found himself having to revise the Sixth Sonata, removing the dissonant *col pugno* pitch groups from the first movement. These, Atovmyan reminded him, would not be sanctioned for publication by Besspalov and the Committee on Arts Affairs. The Ninth Sonata was similarly excluded from the collection, since it had not yet been officially reviewed. “They aren’t approving Sonata no. 9 for the three-volume edition of works for now,” Atovmyan wrote, “next year I’ll see about a separate edition.”¹⁰

The second point of interest concerns Atovmyan’s decision to publish, in the first volume, Prokofiev’s E-minor and G-major sonatinas, which date from 1931 and 1932, respectively. The composer blanched, deeming the works too mild for placement alongside the heavier wartime sonatas. Atovmyan responded by relocating them to the second volume alongside the Fifth Piano Sonata, but this plan also bothered Prokofiev, who reported that “Atovmyan came by to show me his editorial changes to the first volume. Contra my expectations, it was well done. He said that the Fifth Sonata and perhaps the two Sonatinas, opus 54, will manage to be included in the second volume.” Prokofiev looked over the three works and “took fright,” concluding that the beautiful but impetuous sonatinas “had to be redone,” and that the Fifth Sonata of 1923 (composed in Ettal, Germany, but showing the influence of the Parisian Francis Poulenc) needed substantial revision, “for example the final pages of the 1st and 3rd movements.”¹¹ Thus began another exercise in commissioned *pererabotka*, but one that would remain mostly incomplete. Prokofiev finished the alteration of the Fifth Sonata in January 1953. Several of the changes soften the harmonic acerbities, but a few appear to be conditioned by voice-leading, specifically an interest in maintaining a flowing texture and a consistent mode of expression (excluding the coda of the third movement, where the aspiration toward homogeneity subsides: meandering, chromatic melodic writing cedes to percussive iterations of single chords). The new sections and substitutions, filling five pages of manuscript paper, range from two to ten measures in length, seemingly inadequate to merit

assigning the work a new opus number, but that is what happened (opus 38 became opus 135). The pianist Anatoliy Vedernikov, who replaced Pavel Lamm as Prokofiev's assistant after Lamm's death in 1951, put the new version of the Fifth Sonata into shape.¹² Prokofiev at first refused to entrust Vedernikov with the realization of the score, but Mira, seeking to preserve his strength, convinced him otherwise. The job was finished in mid-February.

The sonatinas evolved in Prokofiev's imagination into the Tenth and Eleventh Piano Sonatas. Neither work was completed, however, and only the first even begun. The forty-four extant measures of the Tenth Sonata (composed on February 27, 1953) share the same tempo, meter, and tonality as the opening of the E-Minor Sonatina. Prokofiev eliminates the harsh edges in the original texture, delaying the introduction of modulatory pitches (the C-sharp in measure 6 of the Sonatina, precipitating the tonicization of B minor, appears in measure 10 of the Sonata) and filling in the sixteenth- and eighth-note rests that splinter the opening phrase. An impulse to traditionalize, to replace discordant musical fireworks with Mannheim rockets, governs the Tenth Sonata sketch, which was generated with ease, written in an even hand without alternates, cross-outs, or marginalia. It is nonetheless disquieting, showing the composer conventionalizing his own unconventional inspiration and suppressing, for the State Music Publisher, a transgressive past. After 1948 habitual recycling became habitual self-censorship.

Aside from these modest projects, Prokofiev focused on the ballet *The Tale of the Stone Flower*, *War and Peace*, *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don*, the Seventh Symphony, and additional realized and unrealized collaborations with Rostropovich. Between 1950 and 1952, doctors and nurses permitting, Prokofiev maintained the following routine: work in the mornings; light tasks in the afternoons; reading, listening to the radio, and strolling in the evenings. Given the circumstances, his perseverance with large-scale orchestral and theatrical works is impressive, although, as in the case of his chamber works, his achievement comes with reservations. At the end of his life, Prokofiev did not so much compose freely as respond to criticism, adapting his original thoughts to reflect the concerns of his helpers and minders who, with Mira's blessing, stopped by the dacha or apartment in the afternoons. He griped about the endless demands but accommodated them, even when it meant turning the clock back on his creativity to his Conservatory days, when he was obliged to compose fugues in the style of Bach and sonatas in the style of Haydn. To argue with his interlocutors was

to forfeit income, a point proved by the fraught history of *The Tale of the Stone Flower*.

Bazhov

The ballet originated in the summer of 1948, in the wake of the fallout from the February Resolution. The endurance of *Cinderella* in the repertoire prompted him to entertain Lavrovsky's offer to collaborate on a lavish folklore-based spectacle. (Earlier, the composer had discussed writing a balletic version of the Eros and Psyche myth in collaboration with Volkhov, scenarist of *Cinderella*.)¹³ Living near each other in Nikolina Gora, Prokofiev and Lavrovsky bounced ideas back and forth for several weeks, contemplating, for instance, a ballet based on Pushkin's imitation folktale *The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Heroes* (*Skazka o myortvoy tsarevne i o semi bogatiryakh*, 1833), until they learned that another composer had already taken it up. Lavrovsky confessed an interest in the stories of Pavel Bazhov, a writer from the Siberian town of Siser't who dedicated himself to animating the forgotten folklore of the Urals.¹⁴ At this point Mira weighed in, proposing that Lavrovsky and Prokofiev base their ballet on one or more of the stories in Bazhov's 1939 collection *The Malachite Box* (*Malakhitovaya shkatulka*), which existed in several editions and had provided inspiration for a successful film, *The Stone Flower: A Legend from the Urals* (*Kamenniy tsvetok [Ural'skiy skaz]*, 1946).¹⁵ Recognizing Lavrovsky's limited literary skills, Mira worked with him on the scenario. At the choreographer's insistence, the Bolshoy Theater offered Prokofiev a generous commission for the score: 40,000 rubles, to be paid in four installments. Bitter experience had taught him, however, to expect nothing more than the advance.

The cultural climate was such that Mira and Lavrovsky had no choice but to engage in ideological tutelage in the scenario. Here the film version of *The Stone Flower* furnished a useful model, filtering apolitical fantasy through political reality to honor socialist realist convention. Instead of never-never land, the story is set in late nineteenth-century Siberia, where magic events happen within the context of class struggle between masters and servants. The Mistress of Copper Mountain, a spiteful goddess with a surfeit of psychic energy, symbolizes the Motherland; Danila, an honest but obtuse stone carver, assumes the role of the artist-worker. Danila's obsession with creating a perfect stone flower out of malachite leads him to abandon his betrothed, Katerina, for admission into a fantastic mountain warehouse. Once there, he

falls into the Mistress's clutches. Katerina meanwhile must fend for herself against the ogre Severyan. As in Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, a work that Prokofiev once disdained, Eros intervenes to reunite the hero and heroine. Told on screen and stage, the story is self-reflexive—an artistic creation about artistic creation. Malachite, it bears noting, is sometimes believed to have magical healing powers, the ability to rejuvenate body and soul. For Prokofiev, the virtue of the story resided in its homage to craftsmanship and the search for perfection in one's work. In the last years of his life, the composer himself became a dutiful laborer, upholding the pre-Enlightenment notion of music making as a craft designed to please the patron and audience. Rather than subverting harmonic and structural conventions, he burnished his credentials as a retrospective composer.

Like all of Prokofiev's dramatic works, *The Tale of the Stone Flower* traveled a rough route to the stage. The initial outline of the four-act ballet, listing each number and each musical theme, is dated September 6, 1948. No fewer than seven versions of the scenario exist, the first dating from 1948 (four acts in eight scenes with a prologue and epilogue) and the last from 1954 (three acts in eight scenes with a prologue and epilogue). Before arriving at the final, simplified version, Mira and Lavrovsky filled 125 pages of paper with drafts. The third version includes a note in Prokofiev's hand: "8 copies right away, 3 on better quality paper."¹⁶ The note is dated August 30, 1950, around the time of the first run-through of the piano score at the Union of Soviet Composers. (Multiple copies of scenarios were typically provided to opera and ballet adjudicators.) The fifth version includes another note in the composer's hand—"6 copies right away!"¹⁷ This presumably refers to preparations for the second run-through. The final version of the scenario dates from after Prokofiev's death: he did not see the ballet on the stage, and did not finish all of the music himself: it was finished for him.

Herewith a summary of the contents of the first version of the scenario, which attests to Mira's, Lavrovsky's, and Prokofiev's efforts to create, according to an oxymoronic 1952 newspaper bulletin, "a realistic, authentically folkloric spectacle imbued with a strong socialist theme."¹⁸ The prologue introduces the Mistress of Copper Mountain, who embodies the power and beauty of nature. She holds aloft her masterpiece—a stone flower—fused from the four elements of matter. Also introduced is Danila, who has taken on the task of carving a true-to-life image of a flower.

Act I, scene 1, comprises a solo dance in which Danila roams the Elysium fields seeking a flower to serve as a model for his carving. Finding none, he

sinks into despair. Katerina consoles him as part of a lyric adagio. The crack of a whip is heard in the distance: Severyan, the foreman of a mine, is beating his workers for failing to meet their quota. Seeing the workers struggling to excavate the heavy lumps of malachite from the mine, Danila tries to intervene, but Katerina holds him back. An intermezzo reinforces the theme of the exploited worker: Severyan lashes an old man who has collapsed under his load. A broad-shouldered lad challenges the ogre, but Severyan threatens him with a pistol, at which point the would-be rescuer, having added the old man's load to his own, stumbles away. Fairy tales, of course, do not usually involve firearms.

The following scene combines diegetic dance with more pantomime. In anticipation of Danila and Katerina's wedding, the girls of the village perform a nuptial *khorovod*. The couple then bids farewell to the villagers in a pair of ensemble numbers. Severyan breaks up the nuptial celebrations, demanding to see the chalice and stone flower that Danila carved for the local baron. The ogre mocks the wedding and makes a crude pass at Katerina. After he departs, the focus of the action shifts to Danila's dissatisfaction with his art. His former teacher, the master carver Prokopich, tells the story of the Mistress of Copper Mountain: "In her garden grows a stone flower; those who experience it learn to create beauty. But not all are fit to meet the Mistress and enter her garden. She aids only the boldest, most decisive, and most freedom-loving people [the word *workers* is handwritten above *people* in the typescript]." As the old man tells his tale, Danila sees a dream image of the Mistress shimmering in a green copper dress and beckoning him with outstretched hands. He returns home to his hut obsessed, to Katerina's consternation, with visiting the sorceress's Ural mountain lair.

The two scenes of act 2 consist largely of group dances, with the intermezzo reprising the music of the act 1 intermezzo. Arriving in the Mistress's lair, Danila learns that he must pass through a series of trials before being allowed to see the coveted flower. He resists her amorous advances (trial one), which precipitates a lyrical adagio representing Katerina. The Mistress next promises Danila untold wealth, which he refuses on principle. "You won't take it?" the Mistress asks. "I won't think of it!" Danila answers (trial two). The third trial, which is partially deleted in the typescript, involves Danila justifying his quest for the stone flower. "He has come here," Mira and Lavrovsky write, "not for wealth, but to see the flower, to achieve great mastery and share it with the people." Danila mimes, "I can't live without the flower!" Having verified his socialist credentials, the Mistress admits

him into her garden, and there Danila disappears for several months. Fall becomes winter; spring cedes to summer. During this period, the Mistress appears before Severyan to explain that his capitalist exploitation of nature will leave the foothills barren for the next generation. Katerina, left without a source of income, enlists Prokopich to teach her carving.

Acts 3 and 4 involve significant repetition, and Mira and Lavrovsky were obliged to delete events that provided symmetry but slowed the plot-line. Act 3 opens in a peasant market, the pretext for the insertion of a folk dance pageant. In the first scene, Katerina shows the fruits of her labors to passers-by, only to be accosted by Severyan, who performs a drunken dance. During the intermezzo, the Mistress reappears, heaping as much disdain on Severyan as she had kindness on Danila. The ogre brandishes his pistol but receives his comeuppance when the Mistress plants him in the earth, transforms him into a poppy, and finally erases him from view altogether. In act 4, Katerina resolves to find Danila. Aided by a magic helper—the sparkling fire pixie Ognevushka-Poskakushka—she dances her way into the mountain warehouse, where she is reunited with her betrothed, who explains his absence by unveiling the stone flower. Mira and Lavrovsky planned to preface this episode with a second *Magic Flute*-like trial scene, but for unknown reasons changed their minds. The act ends with a group dance involving the denizens of the mountain warehouse, the Mistress, and the happy couple. A brief epilogue finds Danila sharing his creative talent with the liberated workers of the village. The Mistress blesses them from afar.¹⁹

Once the scenario was drafted, Prokofiev, during periods of better health, composed the music, beginning it on September 18, 1948, and finishing on March 24, 1949. Since the work needed to be freighted with discrete, accessible numbers bearing no narrative content, Prokofiev opted to recycle “Swan” from *Ivan the Terrible* Part I as the act 1, scene 2 *khorovod*. Other self-borrowings—which Prokofiev identified in the original musical outline for the ballet—include the number “Evening” (Vecher) from his 1935 *Music for Children*, which serves as the hero and heroine’s love theme, and the songs “Dunyushka” and “The Monk” (Chernets) from his 1944 Russian folksong settings.²⁰ Their melodies are heard in act 1, scene 2 and act 3. The composer also recycled “To the Motherland” (K Rodine) from his 1939 song collection to illustrate Katerina’s domesticity.

In a fatuous account of their collaboration, Lavrovsky claimed that Prokofiev began the score by “finding” the fanfare for the Mistress of Copper Mountain and devising a series of static recollection themes for the other

characters.²¹ The choreographer acknowledges that he confounded the composer by insisting on the insertion of an ersatz gypsy dance in act 3 whose melody would recur in distorted guises to undercut Severyan's grotesque overtures to Katerina. Prokofiev told Lavrovsky that "yes, I understand that this scene is needed, but I must ask you, if possible, to lay out your wishes in more detail. I confess, I've never thought to write a gypsy piece, I don't know, I've never heard them." The claim was false: Prokofiev had had occasional exposure to gypsy music over the course of his career. Purporting to educate the composer, Lavrovsky brought Semyon Stuchevsky, the concert master of the Bolshoy Theater, to the dacha, and had him improvise some gypsy dances at the piano. Prokofiev was horrified: "Sorry, but I'm closing the window. I can't permit such sounds to come from [my] dacha." Upon working out his own version of a gypsy dance, he told the choreographer: "When friends hear what I'm composing and ask what I'm writing I say that Lavrovsky has bad taste and forces me to write these things."

The outline and sketches of the ballet reveal that Prokofiev struggled with the traditional ballet number format and with the need to feature folk dance.²² The composer's greatest problems concerned the transitions between numbers, which had to advance the plot while also getting dancers positioned for their next routine. Ballet critics of the period advocated the integration of pantomime, solo variations, and ensemble dancing, but they also argued for greater diversity in the selection of numbers. In the opinion of one strident critic, Igor Moiseyev, a dancer and ballet master at the Bolshoy Theater, dance had become "the least interesting part of ballet," losing out to the expressive force of music. Moiseyev further argued that Soviet ballet suffered from a deficit, rather than a surplus, of abstraction. In his view, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella* overemphasized pantomime at the expense of audience-pleasing ensembles and variations; Prokofiev and Lavrovsky distrusted "the language of dance." To remedy the situation, Moiseyev advocated a partial reversion to classical norms. If, as he believed, nineteenth-century ballet had failed in its quest to incorporate sociopolitical content (or "rational concepts") into dance, then Soviet ballet had forsaken its commitment to the opposite: the incorporation of dance into sociopolitical content.²³

Prokofiev, an erstwhile disciple of Diaghilev, found it difficult to revert to convention and wisecracked about the conservatism of his new ballet. His 1948–49 notebooks provide a characteristic example: "The 'Dance of the Little Swans' from *Swan Lake* was written by Chaikovsky under the strong influence of Prokofiev."²⁴ In his diary, he joked that

I finished up the “Russian Dance” for *The Stone Flower*. Lavrovsky shifted one sixteen-measure passage [four phrases of four measures each]. The dance was played for members of the corps de ballet, who said that it was less like Prokofiev than Chaikovsky. Thankfully, it wasn’t like Minkus.²⁵

Although Lavrovsky encouraged Prokofiev to avoid asymmetry, the composer found it unpleasant to do so, pointing out that Stravinsky’s *Petrushka*, which had been written forty years before, altogether lacked balanced four-measure phrases. Lampooning a nineteenth-century nationalist catchphrase about advancing “to new shores” (associated with Musorgsky and the arch-nationalist critic Vladimir Stasov), Prokofiev complained that the only way he could move “forward” was by going “backward to Chaikovsky.”²⁶ Lavrovsky evidently convinced him, however, that the best way to represent the hero of the ballet, a traditional craftsman, was through a musical and choreographic translation of his tried-and-true stonecutting techniques. By composing perfectly balanced antecedent-consequent phrases, for example, Prokofiev would allow Lavrovsky’s dancers to execute their *ronds de jambe en l’air* and *sissonnes en pointe* with chiseled precision. The reliance on rondo forms likewise allowed the ensembles to form concentric bands and other figurative shapes, imitating the look of polished malachite.

Confronted with the challenge of tacking stylistically back in time, Prokofiev transformed *The Tale of the Stone Flower* into a primer on nineteenth-century Russian music, filling the divertissements with *kuchkist*-era folksong abstractions. The roster of nationalist (exoticist) clichés includes the pentatonic scale, quartal-quintal cadences, and chordal progressions from the tonic major to the tonic augmented to the flattened submediant. Prokofiev uses folklike melodies as *canti firmi*, decorating them with orchestral figurations of increasing lavishness. He drew inspiration for his dances from recordings of folksongs from Sverdlovsk, which he obtained from the Moscow Conservatory library. In a traditional wedding celebration, ostinato-based dance tunes, or *naigrishi*, would be repeated by either small ensemble or a balalaika or concertino player until fatigue overtook the dancers. Shunning verisimilitude, Prokofiev keeps his wedding dances implausibly brief. In the outline of the ballet, he separates act 1, scene 2, into ten numbers, permitting Katerina’s girlfriends three minutes and twenty seconds for their group dance, and Danila’s cronies (the picaresque bachelors

of the village) one minute and forty-five seconds.²⁷ The preceding *khorovod* (No. 7) involves two melodies of similar intervallic content, which alternate in the first and third sections of the dance. In the second section, the two themes are fused. This clever example of self-conscious compositional craftsmanship recalls Glinka's *Kamarinskaya*, in which two melodies—one drawn from folk dance, the other from folksong—pass through each other. Prokofiev reprises his *khorovod* in No. 25, when Katerina laments the absent Danila, and in No. 28, when she rejoices his return to her.

Once one form of traditionalism was exhausted, others took its place. Arlene Croce notes that Lavrovsky's choreography for *The Tale of the Stone Flower* features "lyrical-adagio" numbers, "character-folk" numbers, and, "for the scenes in the glowing green underground kingdom of precious stones, a spiky type of *ballet moderne*" redolent of the machine dances of the 1920s.²⁸ Having determined the lengths of the numbers according to Lavrovsky's blueprint, Prokofiev assigned them emblematic Chaikovskian tonalities (D major defines the rustic world, A major the magic world, E major and E minor the powers of good and evil) and timbres (the oboe denotes Katerina, the French horn the Mistress, the E-flat clarinet Severyan). The interlacing of diatonic, modal, and chromatic gestures on the surface of the score resembles Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.

The secondary characters, or *coryphées*, in *The Tale of the Stone Flower* all have direct antecedents in nineteenth-century Russian opera.²⁹ The rogue Severyan is an amalgam of the shameless seducer Vladimir Galitsky in Borodin's *Prince Igor* and the menacing blacksmith Yeryomka in Aleksandr Serov's *The Power of the Fiend*. The mournful variation "Where hast thou gone, Danilushko" (Gde ti, Danilushko) performed by Katerina in act 2 calls to mind Lyubava's lament in scene 3 of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko*. The contrast between Katerina and the Mistress of Copper Mountain likewise parallels the contrast between Lyubava, a homemaker, and Volkhova, a sorceress, in that opera. Unlike Rimsky-Korsakov, Prokofiev elected to blur the border between reality and fantasy. Musically, the scenes in the village rhyme with the scenes in the Mistress's lair: Katerina's and Danila's diatonic leitmotifs inform the chromatic waltzes of the jewels and stones. The Mistress's leitmotif, moreover, leaks into the real-world dances at regular intervals. It is sometimes heard intact, other times in fragments, as though filtered through flawed human memory. The ballet's apotheosis likewise interweaves the magical and the real—a result that could be compared to the first and second acts of *The Nutcracker* being mapped on top of each other.

The score is unified on another level. Prokofiev reprises the melodies of the act 1 *divertissement* in the act 3 *divertissement*, forming a bridge between Danila and Katerina's wedding festivities and the folk dance pageant. By twinning the subjective (personal) and objective (national) in such a cheerful manner, the ballet affirms its fidelity to Soviet aesthetics. Thus the mood of *The Tale of the Stone Flower* differs from that of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, where the marriage of romance and politics is fraught. If, as Croce hypothesizes, Prokofiev's first and second Soviet ballets are "neurotic" and "brooding" affairs, his third ballet is perhaps best termed a surrender to popular demand, with the hero having "to choose between making art for the people and pursuing ivory- (or, in his case, malachite-) tower perfectionism."³⁰

The references to the classics ensured *The Tale of the Stone Flower* a positive initial reception and prompted Lavrovsky to propose that he and Prokofiev work together on a ballet version of *Othello*, an idea that Prokofiev, disgruntled and exhausted, dismissed as a failure waiting to happen. Since he did not have the strength to introduce the piano score of *The Tale of the Stone Flower* to his overseers, he entrusted the task to Richter, explaining that he could not begin the orchestration until he knew what scenes would have to be recast, but that he nonetheless wanted to move forward with the task, since he needed the income from the ballet. Richter, however, left Moscow for a series of concert engagements on the eve of the June 24, 1949, run-through at the Bolshoy Theater, which forced Prokofiev to enlist a rehearsal pianist named Aleksey Zibtsev and left him carping (in an unsent July 16, 1949, letter to Atovmyan) that "Richter is a swine."³¹ Four days before the run-through, Myaskovsky jovially predicted to Prokofiev that Zibtsev's performance would be uneven: "For the first act he'll earn a kiss, a smooch; for the second he'll be patted on the shoulder; for the third he'll have to be spanked."³² The pianist rose to the occasion, however, providing an interpretation that garnered an enthusiastic response, with a member of the Committee on Arts Affairs declaring that the ballet was "a celebration, not only of [Prokofiev], but of all our art."³³ *Sadko* was a point of comparison in the assessment. (Perhaps for this reason, Prokofiev in 1950 recorded having a dream in which Rimsky-Korsakov played through a bowdlerized version of the opera for him. The title character, a fisherman blessed by a mermaid, had been transformed into a Red Army soldier.)³⁴

The positive initial reception of *The Tale of the Stone Flower* delighted Prokofiev—he had been dreading a repeat of the *Story of a Real Man*

debacle—but the strain occasioned by the run-through further compromised his health. On July 7, 1949, he suffered a stroke. Although he recovered, the headaches, fever, and nausea that had restricted his activities since 1945 significantly worsened. For a time, Mira and his children (who had begun to visit him more frequently) thought death was imminent. Olga Lamm saw Prokofiev that summer at Nikolina Gora and was struck by his red complexion, slurred speech, and problems concentrating. “Mira Aleksandrovna, holding his hand, tenderly and fearfully tried to calm him down and kept on repeating ‘Seryozhenka, let’s go home, let’s go home now.’ But Sergey Sergeyevich kept on turning to Nikolay Yakovlevich [Myaskovsky], evidently wanting to explain something to him.”³⁵ Mira proposed transferring Prokofiev to a Moscow clinic, but the road from Nikolina Gora back to the city had become impassable owing to the rebuilding of a bridge. He was confined to the dacha until August, pining to travel to the south to rest by the sea.³⁶ Popov brought painkillers from the city; a hired nurse applied leeches (an efficacious but ghastly treatment for reducing swelling of blood vessels), and a therapist monitored his activities. “‘Could it be I’ll never hear *War and Peace* or any of my other works again?’” he asked Mira. “‘Could it be that all of our works are unwanted, that they will all go to waste?’” he asked Myaskovsky.³⁷ Olga Lamm adds that one doctor, Rosa Ginsberg, humanely acquiesced to Prokofiev’s pleas for more work time. “One cannot keep an artist from creating,” Ginsberg mused, “the music will live in his soul, and the impossibility of writing it out will only worsen his moral and psychological state: ‘Let him live a shorter life, but as he wishes.’”³⁸

The Kremlin Hospital

Prokofiev recovered in the late fall, but his health declined again in the winter. On February 10, 1950, another caregiver, Nina Popova, and the physician-therapist E. I. Sokolov confined him—without pen and paper—to bed. Through the intervention of Shostakovich, who communicated urgently on Prokofiev’s behalf to Molotov, Prokofiev was admitted into the Kremlin hospital, to which he no longer had privileged access, for treatment of hypertrophy. Shostakovich likewise used his political influence (he served at the time as a deputy on the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR) to have Mira admitted to the hospital for a long-delayed operation to remove a cyst. “The professors who have been monitoring [S. S. Prokofiev’s] health work in the *lechtsanupr* of the Kremlin and can

therefore monitor him if he and his wife are placed in the Kremlin hospital," Shostakovich redundantly beseeched Molotov. "S. S. Prokofiev is not registered in the *lechtsanupr* of the Kremlin. If it can be done, he needs to be registered and, in any case now, perhaps by making an exception, admitted to the hospital."³⁹ Molotov signed off on the request on February 17. For three weeks, until March 15, Prokofiev and Mira wrote notes to each other from separate wards of the hospital. These furnish a humdrum chronology of doctors' and nurses' rounds, brief visits from select acquaintances—some, Rostropovich and Richter, more welcome than others, Kabalevsky and Lev Knipper—and laborious convalescences. For stimulus, Prokofiev read when he could, though one of his caregivers suggested that he spend less time with Chekhov and more with children's tales like *The Headless Horseman*.⁴⁰ Shlifshiteyn dispatched a telegram congratulating him on his Cello Sonata, which Rostropovich and Richter premiered at the Moscow Conservatory on March 1. In a woeful recollection, Richter remarks that during the worst period of Prokofiev's illness, his doctors confiscated his manuscript paper, thus obliging the patient to jot down his ideas on napkins that he tucked under his pillow.⁴¹ Later, when his doctors permitted him to work, he corrected the piano score of *The Tale of the Stone Flower*, which Pavel Lamm had helped assemble from the sketches.

Toward the end of his stay in the hospital (he was there two and a half weeks longer than Mira) and with his thoughts turning back to full-time work, Prokofiev received an invitation from the director Aleksandrov to write original music for a biographical film about Glinka. The film, Aleksandrov explained, would represent the cherished nineteenth-century composer as a strident defender of the peasant class and, by extension, an opponent of the Romanov family. As if to atone for its bowdlerization of history, the film would also include spectacular excerpts from Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* and *A Life for the Tsar*.

The project appealed to Prokofiev because it would allow him to merge his musical method—and his entire legacy—with that of his distinguished predecessor. He sought, in other words, to provide a context for his career that would have nothing to do with his catastrophic run-ins with the Committee on Arts Affairs and everything to do with the history of Russian culture. He even imagined writing an opera "based on the material of the film," though he quickly, and prudently, banished the thought. "Certain episodes" in Aleksandrov's screenplay "enthralled him," Mira recalled. "Others (the descriptions of Glinka's disappointments and the failure of *Ruslan*

and Lyudmila) he found exceedingly painful.”⁴² Disheartened by the lack of performances of his own operas, Prokofiev decided against working on the film. The director instead enlisted Shebalin and Vladimir Shcherbachov, awarding Richter a cameo appearance as Liszt. Titled *Kompozitor Glinka* in Russian and *Glinka: Man of Music* in English, the film was released in 1952 to positive reviews.

On April 20, Prokofiev left the hospital and traveled with Mira to the Podlipki sanatorium in Barvikha, where he remained until the start of summer. The atmosphere at the facility ranged from restful to restive, with the composer receiving a steady stream of visitors and even attending the occasional concert. Kabalevsky, who both chided and appropriated Prokofiev’s music during the period of their acquaintance, monitored his convalescence on behalf of the Union of Soviet Composers. The management of Prokofiev’s return to political health—he remained, after all, a “fallen” artist—occurred at a higher level within the Party apparatus. During his stay at Barvikha, Prokofiev received a visit from the novelist Aleksandr Fadeyev, a depression-prone but committed servant of the regime elected to the Central Committee and Supreme Soviet. Fadeyev sanctioned Sergey Balasanyan, deputy director of the Radio Committee and the officer responsible for music programming, to commission an oratorio from Prokofiev.⁴³

Fadeyev assigned the libretto to Marshak, with whom Prokofiev had worked in the fall of 1949 on a suite of children’s pieces called *Winter Bonfire*. The suite, a Radio Committee commission broadcast in the last week of March 1950, features a chorus of Pioneer boys who sing in pairs and unison about their train ride from the city to the country to visit a collective farm.⁴⁴ Between the orchestral movements, a narrator describes the falling snow outside the train windows, the crackling of the winter bonfire, and the meeting of the Pioneers and the children on the farm. Prokofiev assigned the suite a symmetrical form, reprising the illustrative locomotive music of movement 1 in movement 8, balancing the whimsical snowfall movement (2) with a melancholic nocturne (6), and surrounding the Pioneer chorus with orchestral renditions of crackling flames. The rondo waltz (3) recalls Chaikovsky, which may explain why Prokofiev joked in his diary that he had helped Chaikovsky compose *Swan Lake*. In search of additional, neoclassical inspiration, Prokofiev seems to allude to the finale of Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella* in movement 7 of the suite, but he made sure to avoid that score’s capricious harmonic and rhythmic breakdowns. The suite adheres to C major, departing in the rustic bonfire scenes to a “pastoral” F major.

The success of *Winter Bonfire*, and the follow-up success of the oratorio *On Guard for Peace*, paved the way for the subsequent commissioning of *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don* and the Seventh Symphony.⁴⁵ All four works were composed for State Radio: the first, second, and fourth for the children's programming division, and the third for the adult programming division. Here it merits correcting the musicologist Stanley Krebs's intuition that the focus on children's issues in Prokofiev's late works has unsettling implications. "Adults deemed through boards or the court as chronically 'anti-social' are often sent to work with children in camps, orphanages and clubs."⁴⁶ Krebs adds that this practice was codified in the mid-1950s, after the Stalinist era. To be sure, artists, particularly writers, facing censorship routinely moved into children's literature, but they did so of their own volition, without instruction from "boards or the court." This practice dates primarily from the mid-1930s, before the worst phase of the purges, not after. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Prokofiev was merely relying on the people and venues available to him for commissions: he had not been branded "anti-social" by the regime; rather, he remained a valued celebrity.

Marshak was Fadeyev's second choice as librettist of *On Guard for Peace*. His first, Nikolay Tikhonov, a Stalin Prize winner and chairman of a committee for the defense of peace, turned down the project, citing inexperience writing for children. Prokofiev had neither author in mind when he conceived the oratorio. He first discussed it with the music critic and dramatist Aleksandr Gayamov, one of his longtime acquaintances. Gayamov hoped to collaborate with Prokofiev on an opera and frequently encouraged the composer to set the first part of Aleksey Tolstoy's unfinished historical novel *Peter the First* (*Pyotr Pervyy*, 1929–45), an acclaimed work of the Soviet period. In consultation with Gayamov, Prokofiev worked up an outline for a five-part oratorio involving a "broad Russian theme," followed by an orchestral tableau representing the Great Patriotic War. There would ensue a recitative directed to "the peoples of the world" and a depiction of "the citizens of the future," who defend the "ideal" of peace. The oratorio would conclude with choral affirmations of this ideal.

Prokofiev thereafter discussed the oratorio with another associate, Ilya Ehrenburg, who offered to serve in Gayamov's stead as the librettist. Ehrenburg's conception of the work proved unacceptable, however, for it threatened to provoke an international incident, at least within cultural sectors. His twelve-part scenario details a U.S. nuclear attack on the Soviet Union.

1. The morning of May 10, 1945. Ruins. Part of a home with a gutted interior. Half of a bridge across a river: the bridge leads nowhere. Graves, graves, graves. The rockets' flames have expired; the ships' cannons have fallen silent. The soldiers return home in faded, tattered fatigues. They see ashes, children's hungry eyes, and grief in the home front.

How he desired Victory, how he dreamed of it. He came from the war; she went to meet him. But they no longer knew each other.

The exhausted soldier, having returned home, seeks rest. But there is no rest: the ruins await builders. The people work in desperation, with all their strength, beyond their strength.

In America someone chuckles: "They won't rebuild the country." London's ruins. Rotterdam's ruins. Havre's ruins. Calm. Hammers ring out: the people rebuild Kiev, Voronezh, Stalingrad. A song, brought by a soldier from the war, carries into the timber felling.

2. Terrible drought; cloudless skies. The wheat withers. There's another struggle to endure. In America someone cheers: "They won't endure this."

3. A Stalingrad square. A Smolensk theater. An Oryol nursery. Warsaw rises from the ashes. Sofia's streets are rebuilt.

4. In America the enemies of peace conspire: "Release the atom bomb." They release it. Two bombs. Twenty bombs. Fish die in the sea. Grass withers. Life ends.

Business is good, very good. The stock market cheers. Shares of aircraft factories. Shares of Belgian uranium. Shares of war. Sell, buy. Release the bomb faster.

5. The French winemaker looks at the sky in horror. The Italian peasant girl covers her cradle. The old scientist gazes at his unfinished work.

The third world war. Atom bombs. Poison: one dose to end humankind. The stock market is satisfied. The Atlantic Pact. Let the French fight, we will reap the profits. The stock market celebrates.

6. A black cloud hangs over all of Europe's cities. Anxiety. The former soldier asks: "Could it be happening again?"

7. The Soviet people continue working. The old man plants a tree; it will grow after his death. He believes in peace. The people believe in peace.

8. The Soviet people continue to work: they know that Stalin means peace. But peace must be loved, peace must be defended...

9. The struggle for peace begins. Parisian workers march. Italian fishermen march. Czechs, Indians, Poles, and Hollanders march. China rises up, stands, and prevails in the war. Soviet song, like a spring breeze, embraces the world.

10. Grand meetings and street protests. Who is against peace? Only a small group of people: the stock market, the traders wearing suspenders, the traders of death. There are too few atom bombs. We need hydrogen bombs. The death of children, of the reefs, of everything is guaranteed.

11. But no. The people will not permit it. French maidens lie on the rails to delay the military echelons. Italian workers cast tanks into the sea. War will not be sanctioned. And everyone looks to Moscow. Moscow stands for peace.

12. Warning. Do not approach. Neither to the Soviet children nor to the Soviet flowers. This is the line that war does not cross.

A gardener looks peacefully at a tree. A mother peacefully caresses her infant. Peace will defeat war.⁴⁷

Fadeyev advised Prokofiev against setting this horrific text, and the enfeebled composer agreed. The nascent arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union—aggravated by the successful detonation of an atomic bomb in Kazakhstan on August 29, 1949, American advances in the development of a hydrogen bomb, and mutual espionage—mobilized the propaganda industries of both nations. Ehrenburg labored on the front lines of the anti-American campaign, receiving personal permission from Stalin to travel to Western Europe in January 1950 to research a book, *The Ninth Wave* (*Devyatyy val*, 1951), about the post-World War II peace movement.⁴⁸ His scenario for Prokofiev's oratorio derives from *The Ninth Wave* and reflects its tendentiousness.

On Fadeyev's counsel, Prokofiev agreed to work with Marshak, rather than Gayamov or Ehrenburg, on his oratorio. The bureaucrat monitored the creative process to ensure that the oratorio maintained a proper balance between pacifism and militarism. Fadeyev approved the inclusion of a chorus and solo parts for children but cautioned against making the work too saccharine. On July 11, 1950, Marshak reported to Prokofiev that Fadeyev was "very satisfied" with the draft plans for the oratorio and the fact that the "declarative" passages in the libretto had been rendered "more concrete" through the inclusion of a narrator. Marshak lamented, however, that Fadeyev vetoed a favorite feature of the score: the inclusion of real or represented cricket chirps in the "Lullaby" movement (7). These, apparently, would have made the sound too rustic.⁴⁹

Fadeyev's influence on the project was such that Prokofiev needed his—rather than Marshak's—permission to adjust the libretto for musical reasons. The bureaucrat obliged him, enthusing, "In the first place, Marshak's verses are so fine that some of them can be assigned to the narrator: I think that these can be blended harmoniously with the music. In the second place, you should remove those verses that do not suit the music and that you find unnecessary."⁵⁰ Prokofiev thanked Fadeyev for his thoughts and filed a glowing progress report, affirming that the music was written, the piano score copied and in the hands of the conductor Samosud, and the contract signed. Balasanyan bore responsibility for scheduling the run-through. Prokofiev hinted that working on the score had sapped his strength, but he vowed to complete the orchestration by October.⁵¹

This exchange dates from September 22, 1950, two months after Prokofiev's return to Nikolina Gora from Barvikha, and just days after he had absorbed the news of Myaskovsky's death.⁵² His friend of forty-four years had been battling cancer for nearly two, succumbing to it on August 8, 1950. Myaskovsky became aware of his condition in January 1949, when his doctor discovered and removed a small tumor. He recovered in time to hear Rostropovich premiere his folklore-inspired A-Minor Cello Sonata, a work that informed Prokofiev's C-Major Cello Sonata. The concert took place on March 5. The cancer continued to spread, but Myaskovsky insisted on working, hoping to conclude his prolific career with one last symphony (his twenty-seventh) and one last string quartet (his thirteenth). In May 1950, he underwent another, much more critical operation, with the doctors holding back the gravity of his condition from all but his intimates: his three sisters, Lamm, and Shebalin. Myaskovsky died at home on August 8. Mira broke the news to Prokofiev, whose doctors advised him against attending the pub-

lic memorial service at the Moscow Conservatory, leaving him to grieve in private. He would later attend the mounting of a memorial plaque outside his friend's apartment.⁵³ Prokofiev himself was gravely ill. On August 28, a dizzy spell provoked a massive nosebleed and a precipitous drop in blood pressure. Following his tenuous recuperation, Mira vowed that the couple would spend less time at the dacha, which lacked a telephone, and more in the city, near emergency medical services.⁵⁴

Collective Composition

Thus a troubled atmosphere surrounded the creation of *On Guard for Peace*, a work that aligns the quest for peace with the global spread of Communism. Prokofiev relies on declamation, martial strains, and open-ended structures for references to wartime deprivation; tripartite paraphrases of mass songs and unsullied harmonies greet the verbal paeans to Stalin. The oratorio collapses into cliché in movement 6, a strophic number about a dove's flight over the smokestacks of the Soviet capital. The high political stakes of this unambiguous, monological score can be gleaned not only from Fadeyev's interference in its composition, but also from Samosud's insistence that its sentimental content be made even more so to represent, as it were, the people's "helpless[ness] before the enchanting beauty of Communism."⁵⁵ The conductor proposed releasing doves during the performance, or surrounding the performers with images of doves, but the administration of the Hall of Columns rejected these ideas for logistical reasons.⁵⁶

Samosud similarly beseeched Prokofiev and Marshak to include a crowd-pleasing number for boy soprano in the heart of the score. Marshak replied with two poems, "A Letter from an Italian Boy" (Pis'mo ital'yanskogo mal'chika) and "A Lesson in One's Native Language" (Urok rodnogo yazika). The first poem, which Prokofiev did not set, involves a well-informed schoolboy who protests a shipment of rockets from the United States to Italy.⁵⁷ The second poem, which the composer did set, finds an entire classroom of Moscow schoolchildren repeatedly writing the slogan "Peace to all peoples of the world" (Mir vsem narodam na svete) on a blackboard. (Though it might appear paradoxical, the use of this optimistic slogan in a depressing after-class exercise suggests that a commitment to labor leads to the realization of dreams.) Prokofiev enhances the didactic tone by setting the choral refrain of the number, "We don't need war" (Nam ne nuzhna voyna), to a textbook example of a perfect authentic cadence.

The most striking passage in the score comes between the second and third movements, respectively titled “To the ten-year-old” (*Komu sevodnya desyat’ let*) and “City of glory Stalingrad” (*Gorod slavi—Stalingrad*). The second movement opens with a chorus of boys recalling traumatic memories of the dark war years: the blacked-out windows, the blown-out street lights, the trains that pulled out of Moscow after midnight, and the frightful nights of the blitzkrieg. The rhythmic structure suggests a military march, but the melodic line lacks focus, wandering in chromatic darkness through A-flat major, D major, and F major. To heighten the sense of uncertainty, Prokofiev accompanies the first phrase of the vocal line with different versions of an A-flat triad: major, augmented, and minor. Each line of text is punctuated by a rising scalar pattern in the vocal lines, but Prokofiev varies their content, sometimes filling in an interval of a perfect fifth and other times the interval of a tritone. Apart from a representation in the orchestra of a train, Prokofiev refrains from word-painting. He ensures, however, that an emphatic cadence underscores the concluding words about the enemy’s defeat.

The gloom clears in the transition between movements 2 and 3. At this point Prokofiev introduces one of four melodies associated in the oratorio with the pursuit of peace. Here it becomes obvious that the choristers have been groping toward this melody in the preceding measures. Its contours—a leap from the tonic to the submediant of G major, followed by a further ascent to the supertonic and a pair of affirmative cadences—have been anticipated in the preceding vocal lines. The melody and the optimism it signals become more prominent as the oratorio unfolds. In movements 3 and 4, the passage returns in the orchestra; in movements 8 and 10 Prokofiev places it in the chorus. The melody ascends from the “immaterial” orchestral realm into the “material” vocal realm, incarnating itself in the final rhapsodies about global peace and progress toward Communism.

Even with a boy soprano, children’s choruses, and lyrical homage to peace, Prokofiev and his interlocutors worried that the oratorio might not be accessible enough for the authorities. Following a late September run-through of the score at the offices of the Radio Committee, Atovmyan, Balasanyan, Samosud, and the choral director Klavdiy Ptitsa enjoined the composer to rewrite the choral parts and the concluding movement to moderate the difficulties supposedly posed by the harmonic writing.⁵⁸ The changes were made well in advance of the December 19, 1950, premiere of the oratorio in

the Hall of Columns. To explain the paleness of the score, Mira noted that Prokofiev began to compose it after a three-month break, that his doctors allowed him to work on it for no more than ninety minutes a day, and that his medication affected his concentration.⁵⁹ Mira does not, however, make the obvious point that the score suffered from external meddling; Prokofiev began the score, but it was finished by committee. Its paleness is the direct result of a bureaucratic compromise.

Excluding Prokofiev, Samosud played the most active part in the creative process. Mira's account of his concerns merits quoting at length, not least because her story changed over time. In the shorter, later version of her memoirs housed at the Glinka Museum, she is much less candid than in the longer, earlier version housed at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art. Herewith, the Glinka Museum version:

Samosud's hesitation was not groundless: he was troubled to know that some held a negative opinion of the oratorio, and he distrusted those who assured him that the performance would be "smooth" and immediately comprehensible. He was quite tense. But when I asked him for his own opinion of the oratorio and the impression the music made on him, I heard the highest praise. Trying to cheer Samosud up, I told him about the attention paid by A. A. Fadeyev to the oratorio and his keen interest in all of the work Seryozha and Marshak put into it.⁶⁰

And the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art version:

From this and subsequent [telephone] conversations with Samosud, it became clear that he was hesitant, worried, and tense. Though he greatly valued Seryozha's music, he voiced the fear that it would not be immediately comprehensible, that the performance might not be "smooth," since "they only want to hear simple music now." He evidently distrusted the assurances of those people on whom the oratorio's performance and right to exist depended, and trusted those with a completely different opinion. Samosud told me quite bluntly: "If I feel that things look bad for the oratorio I'll just say that I'm sick and can't conduct."

These words frightened me; I knew that it wasn't easy to say them, and that the oratorio's premiere might be canceled. I could imagine the difficulty of Samuil Abramovich's situation, but I was also acutely aware of the irreparable effect that the cancellation would have on the health of Seryozha, who had tried to finish the oratorio as quickly as possible and put so much effort into it. Trying to cheer Samosud up, I told him about the moral support given to Seryozha by A. A. Fadeyev. I also told him about the attention and keen interest paid by Aleksandr Aleksandrovich to each line of [Marshak's] text and Seryozha's musical plan.⁶¹

The premiere of the oratorio was preceded by a week of rehearsals, during which the conductor and performers pestered Prokofiev to thin the texture of the vocal lines, thus continuing the process of simplification that had begun after the critique of the oratorio by the Radio Committee. Prokofiev acquiesced, replacing octaves with unisons and removing large word-painting leaps in the vocal lines. (The 1973 edition of the score includes the altered passages in an appendix, enabling readers to compare “before” and “after” versions.) The premiere was a success, with sustained applause greeting the tuneful middle movements, though here, too, Mira's reaction differs in the first and second drafts of her memoirs. In the published Glinka Museum version, she opined that Prokofiev worried “in vain” about the oratorio; the premiere was a “triumph,” testament to his timely dedication to “the struggle for peace.” In the unpublished Russian State Archive of Literature and Art version, Mira focuses on the rehearsals rather than the premiere. Her reaction to the oratorio is cautious and qualified: “I of course understood that the oratorio's music wouldn't appeal to all composers and that it might provoke heated debates, but is this really sufficient cause for it not to be heard?”⁶²

From this and other comparisons, it emerges that the later version of Mira's memoirs is much less reliable and forthright than the earlier version. She assembled the document piecemeal in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the worst of all times in terms of thought control, and her recollection of what happened to her and Prokofiev mutated into what might have or even should have happened. The premiere of the oratorio was noted in the national and international press coverage but it was neither a “triumph” nor impetus for heated debate. (The reception was positive enough, however,

for the oratorio, together with *Winter Bonfire*, to earn a Second Class Stalin Prize.)⁶³ In the United States, a columnist for *Time* dismissed the oratorio as a jejune act of atonement for a composer seeking to “mend his ways.” Here “Prokofiev’s latter-day Peter comes across a new species of wolf: ‘The sinister, evil voices of the warmongers and Wall Street merchants on their way to Korea, carrying hundreds of thousands of death-dealing bombs.’”⁶⁴ In its formulaic obeisance to the Party, *On Guard for Peace* bears more than just a musical likeness to Shostakovich’s 1949 *Song of the Forests*. Following the Leningrad premiere of that work, Shostakovich reportedly “returned to his room at the Hotel Europe and began to sob, burying his head in a pillow. He sought consolation in vodka.”⁶⁵ Priding himself on personal control, Prokofiev never sought solace in drink.

At the same time Prokofiev was revising the oratorio he completed the piano score and specified the orchestration of *The Tale of the Stone Flower* for his assistant Vedernikov. But the score hung in limbo. Despite having been well received at its first audition, the ballet faltered; rehearsals were delayed by officials at the Bolshoy Theater, who insisted that the composer remove some items from the score (the act 2 “Waltz of the Corals and Sapphires,” for example), add others (the act 3 “Russian Dance”), and enrich the orchestration. Lavrovsky recalled that, during the run-throughs, “voices harshly critical of the music began to be heard. It was said that the music did not respect the artistic character of Bazhov’s tales, that it was gloomy, difficult, and undanceable.” The choreographer felt obliged “to hide a lot” of the “ill-considered, unforeseen, and sometimes even insensitive” comments directed at the composer out of concern for his health.⁶⁶

Prokofiev balked at making the changes, at least until he received payment for the score in accord with his contract. On March 15, 1952, he dispatched a letter to Aleksandr Anisimov, the administrative director of the Bolshoy Theater, asking for the 10,000 rubles he was owed:

The audition and assessment of the ballet took place in the summer of 1949 at the Bolshoy Theater. Representatives from the Committee on Arts Affairs, the administration of the theater, and members of the ballet troupe attended the audition. The piano score was approved, the ballet’s music accepted, and it was agreed that I would proceed to the instrumentation.... I completed the ballet’s instrumentation a long time ago. I spent more than a year on it. I implore

you, Aleksandr Ivanovich, to issue an order for payment of the funds owed to me for the score. . . . Because of my illness, I am in great need of these funds.⁶⁷

The response was disheartening:

The ballet is scheduled for production next season, but the Theater has the right to request that you make some changes and additions to the piano score and, by extension, the orchestral score. For this reason, it would be incorrect to consider the orchestration and likewise all of the work on the ballet finished. Nevertheless, I am confident that you will agree to go over the piano score and, by extension, the orchestral score to meet the needs of the Theater and its community. Hopefully, a consensus will be found that will allow me to pay you the portion of the honorarium in question.⁶⁸

Artistic creation as Prokofiev understood it had been eradicated: rather than evolving from a private process into a public exchange, it began and ended in a bureaucratic tangle. While promoted as an antidote to the elitist inwardness of twelve-tone and serial composition in the West, the reigning Soviet aesthetic stupefied composers and audiences alike by emphasizing ideological obviousness. The impulse to demand one set of changes after another to *The Tale of the Stone Flower* debased what the bureaucrats claimed to honor.

Return to Renown

In the spring of 1952, the cultural establishment belatedly recognized that Prokofiev's health was in serious decline and that he required urgent financial support. The petition for this support came from Besspalov, the chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs, who, on March 24, 1952, offered a candid assessment of Prokofiev's situation to Georgiy Malenkov, the Central Committee Secretary and the First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. The letter and the response to it both merit quotation in full.

Sergey Sergeyevich Prokofiev, People's Artist of the RSFSR, is the preeminent Soviet composer. Prokofiev's name is

known throughout the world, and each new work attracts enormous interest in musical society.

Prokofiev's creative path is complicated and replete with glaring contradictions. He promoted himself as one of the most blatant representatives of the formalist direction while also creating a large number of works of utmost significance to world musical culture. Such compositions as the Classical Symphony, the piano concertos and sonatas, the ballets *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, the *Alexander Nevsky* Cantata, the oratorio *On Guard for Peace*, and many others have resolutely entered the musical repertoire, being performed everywhere with enormous success.

For his services in the work of developing Soviet musical art S. S. Prokofiev was awarded the Order of Lenin and medals of the Soviet Union. He has been bestowed the Stalin Prize six times.

Yet the sixty-year-old S. S. Prokofiev has been seriously ill for several years now. His illness—hypertrophy—progresses day by day. He is prohibited from undertaking any creative work. Consequently, S. S. Prokofiev, a famous composer, is extremely hard up at the present time, which only aggravates the poor state of his health.

At a time when he is deprived of the ability to provide a subsistence wage for himself with creative work, he should be offered immediate material assistance.

As such, the K[omitet po] D[elam] I[skusstv] petitions for

- a) establishment of a personal pension in the amount of 3,000 rubles a month for the composer S. S. Prokofiev;
- b) disbursement to him of a one-time-only benefit of 25,000 rubles;
- c) the costs of the pension and one-time-only assistance given to S. S. Prokofiev to come from the USSR Musical Foundation.

The draft of a Resolution for the USSR Council of Ministers is attached.⁶⁹

For a composer of Prokofiev's stature to become impoverished was unacceptable to Bepalov, a lifelong civil servant whose tenure at the helm of the Committee on Arts Affairs lacked mean-spiritedness. To strengthen his argument, he exaggerated both the precariousness of Prokofiev's health—the composer was not entirely prohibited from working—and the quantity of his official honors, assigning him an award, the Order of Lenin, which he had not in fact received (Shostakovich had). The upper echelon was not impressed with the petition. On April 9, 1952, two cultural officials on the Central Committee, P. V. Lebedev (not to be confused with Polikarp Lebedev, former chairman of the Committee on Arts Affairs) and Boris Yarustovsky, dispassionately amended Bepalov's assessment of Prokofiev's needs.

In accord with the instruction of the USSR Council of Ministers we are presenting our recommendation concerning the K[omitet po] D[elam] I[skusstv] petition for the establishment of a monthly pension and disbursement of a one-time-only benefit to the composer Prokofiev.

Comrade Bepalov's report concerning the composer's "extreme hardship" does not correspond to the facts. This is clearly evident from the following tabulation of his honoraria in 1951:

- 1) Royalties: 87,833 rubles, 57,000 rubles after deductions;
- 2) Honoraria from the Radio Information Committee: 27,000 rubles;
- 3) Honoraria from the Committee on Arts Affairs: 20,000 rubles;
- 4) Total: 104,000 rubles.

Thus it emerges that, on average, Prokofiev's monthly earnings were approximately 8,600 rubles, which cannot be considered an instance of "extreme hardship." It would be sensible, taking into consideration Prokofiev's importance, age, and poor health to arrange a monthly personal pension for him of 2,000 rubles, as supplemental material assistance.

Disbursing a one-time-only benefit is not warranted.

Under the provisions of the government decision this amount can be allotted from the resources of the USSR Musical Foundation.⁷⁰

For all their crankiness, Lebedev and Yarustovsky's recommendations and their acknowledgment of Prokofiev's cultural impact marked the beginning of his transformation into a Soviet Classic. Conscienceless officialdom had begun to atone for the tribulations of 1948.

Two of Prokofiev's compositions were resurrected in 1952, the radical contrast between them attesting to the extremes of Prokofiev's Soviet career. On September 12, *Zdravitsa*, Prokofiev's contribution to Stalin's sixtieth birthday, was broadcast after years of neglect. "They played it well," Prokofiev noted, "but with cuts, and not my own, but theirs (they excised the scalar runs in the chorus, spoiling the form). Yet I'm so pleased they revived it that I've decided to keep quiet for a while."⁷¹ In the domain of hack work, Prokofiev relied on inconstant musical structures to compensate for static verbal content. For this reason, he opined that "Shostakovich's new cantata *Of the Party*" was "bland, workmanlike, and too short."⁷² *Zdravitsa* was re-broadcast on October 8, the same day that the Bolshoy Theater performed *Romeo and Juliet*, with Ulanova dancing the main role. Given the ballet's tortured genesis, its growing fame surprised the composer: "This spectacle is so popular that, as they say, 'better to refuse drink altogether than to drink just now and then.'"⁷³

There followed more good news: the Bolshoy Theater had decided to revive *Cinderella*, this time with the original rather than the altered orchestration. The theater retrieved the autograph manuscript from the Central (Russian) State Archive of Literature and Art, where Prokofiev had deposited it for safekeeping. Stuchevsky speculated that Fayer, director of the Bolshoy Ballet, had become paranoid that he would be censured by cultural officials for performing a corrupt version of the score, and so decided to restore it. Prokofiev wanted no part in the drama. Yet in the end, and for reasons that he could not discern, the Bolshoy Theater still used the corrupt version. Prokofiev noted that the December 24 performance of *Cinderella* "was not only a triumph but, they say, a 'wild triumph.' I wasn't there, but I will go to one of the upcoming performances."⁷⁴ News of the success inspired him to suppress his irritation with his assertive advisers and complete both *War and Peace* and *The Tale of the Stone Flower* according to their suggestions. He received assurances that the ballet, if not the opera, would be produced at the Bolshoy Theater, rather than at one of its Moscow affiliates.

One last piece of good news concerned the Seventh Symphony, which Prokofiev composed from December 1951 to July 1952 (the draft piano score is dated March 20, 1952, the final orchestral score July 5), and which satisfied even his opponents. In keeping with the spirit of the commission, Prokofiev initially called it a “Children’s Symphony”; he ended up changing the title, according to Rostropovich, on account of the Symphony’s appeal to adults.⁷⁵ On August 26, Vedernikov played the piano score at the Union of Soviet Composers in Prokofiev’s absence, and then traveled to the dacha to report that “even the negative people ([Viktor] Beliy, Koval, Goldenweizer)” found a way to praise it, the only quibbles concerning the proposed orchestration.⁷⁶ The Symphony also passed the test with the State Radio Orchestra—“Oh, wonder!” Prokofiev sarcastically noted.⁷⁷ (Still, the musicians exercised their collective right to adjust tempi.) The October 11 premiere had the feel of an old-guard reunion, with Prokofiev accepting congratulations from the veterans of the 1948 scandal. He mounted the stage and took the final bow of his career before an appreciative crowd. Goldenweizer, who had ridiculed *A Story of a Real Man*, began to cry, though Prokofiev could not quite believe it. “I didn’t think that this dried-up old man could be moved to tears, but those in the hall corroborated that he cried into his sleeve.”⁷⁸

The positive reception signaled that the Symphony would receive an award, but Samosud, who conducted the premiere, warned him that the Stalin Prize Committee was not convinced that it merited the highest ranking, since the lugubrious conclusion did not accord with official taste. Samosud reported that “although seven members of the Stalin Prize Committee attended the Symphony and praised it,” there was “a potential snag” in their deliberations: “The finale does not end in joy so, in order not to forfeit first prize for second prize, would it not be possible to create an alternate finale with a happy ending?”⁷⁹ Knowing that Prokofiev had little choice but to accommodate the Committee, Samosud returned the score to him for revision. Prokofiev at first blanched, calling the task “impossible,” but then he rose to the occasion, writing a new, optimistic coda for the fourth movement, which Samosud premiered on November 6 and the composer pretended to like. To the melancholic recollection of the second and third themes from the first movement he added a jarring reprise of the glib opening tune of the fourth. For his efforts, he would posthumously earn a single-class Lenin Prize (the awarding of Stalin Prizes having been discontinued after the ruler’s death).

In a bulletin written for the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS), Prokofiev defined the Symphony as a tribute to youth that sought to “reflect the spiritual beauty and strength of the young people of our country,” the “joy of life,” and the desire to move “forward to the future.”⁸⁰ In a June 12, 1962, interview with Malcolm Brown, Mira clarified that the Symphony addressed “Soviet youth” as well as Prokofiev’s “own youth.”⁸¹ Taking these remarks at face value, it would appear that he intended the work to be both forward- and backward-looking, both public and private. The music sounds sincere but fragile. After learning that the run-through of the Symphony at the Composers’ Union had been a success, Prokofiev asked Kabalevsky whether it was “too simple.”⁸² He clung to the hope that one day, with one of his works, he would be asked to make the music more complex.

The Symphony clings to traditional forms and syntax, but the melodic writing meanders, with the abrupt tonal shifts serving less to dramatize the four movements than to slacken them. Prokofiev cast the first movement in a semblance of sonata form. There are three themes ranging in affect from nostalgic to inspired to withdrawn. The first is heard seven times intact: four times in the exposition, twice in the recapitulation, and once in the disquieting coda. Prokofiev harmonizes the theme with tonic and subdominant chords. The transition between the first and second presentations involves a running pattern that becomes the accompaniment of the third and fourth presentations. The modulation to the dominant for the repetition of the first theme, rather than the appearance of the second theme, recalls Haydn’s monothematic sonata form expositions. Prokofiev introduces the second theme first in the horns and bassoons and then in the strings. The dynamic level dips to that of a lullaby, with the woodwinds and glockenspiel paired to present the closing theme.

There is little drama in the development section: the three themes are varied without contrapuntal overlay, this leading to a dominant pedal, the return of the home key, and the recapitulation of the first theme. Prokofiev here enlarges the tonal palette. The movement ends with the woodwinds and glockenspiel rousing the specter of the first theme.

The remainder of the Symphony is more spirited, with the composer manipulating waltz genres in the second movement and paying homage to a previous work, *Eugene Onegin*, in the third. (It reuses the theme and variations from *Eugene Onegin* that connote the heroine Tatyana and her feelings for Onegin.) The fourth and final movement combines a *valse à deux temps*, the historical precursor of the polka, with a giddy march. Brown notes that

the composer's "favored effect of sudden tonal dislocation can be found throughout the symphony, both unexpected digressions within a phrase... as well as sudden displacements of the tonic between phrases and at cadences."⁸³ It is hard to avoid concluding that the Symphony was stitched together, with Prokofiev mixing and matching the elements of familiar forms. He perhaps amused himself by misaligning the harmonic and melodic writing, inserting cadences in the middle of phrases, and using leading tones—rather than the tonics and dominants—as pedal points. The distortions might be interpreted as programmatic representations of the fickleness of memory; they might also be interpreted as expressions of boredom. In the finale, the effortless handling of form at once transcends and mocks the trivial content. Brown defines the progression from "galop" to "march" as a "virtual thesaurus of familiar clichés from the conventional Soviet music of [the] day."⁸⁴

In his post-1948 works Prokofiev muted his creative voice. Goldenweizer wept when he heard the Symphony—perhaps out of love for the music, perhaps also out of shame for the manner in which he had participated in the humiliation of a brilliant composer. So, too, did the Party-line Ukrainian musician Konstantin Dankevich, who had "insanely attacked" Prokofiev following the premiere of *Semyon Kotko*, but who himself came in for censure in 1951. Seeing the sadness and remorse on Dankevich's face, Prokofiev commented that "this was now a second evil-wisher (the first was Goldenweizer) who wept" upon hearing the Symphony.⁸⁵

The Final Works

The other premieres of 1952 include the "festive poem" *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don* and its cerebral obverse: a taxing, large-scale composition for cello and orchestra that Prokofiev completed with the energetic assistance of Rostropovich. The first of these works, a throwaway composition representing inspired work brigades building a massive freight and passenger ship waterway between the Volga and Don Rivers, was broadcast on State Radio on February 22, 1952.⁸⁶ Prokofiev greeted Balasanyan, Rostropovich, and Samosud's proposal to compose the fifteen-minute score with skepticism, if not incredulity, but needing the income, accepted it. The composer developed the sketches piecemeal in August 1951 and worked out the orchestration from October 12 to November 18.⁸⁷ His knowledge of the gigantic engineering project to be celebrated by his score came from the numerous reports about it in *Pravda*, *Izvestiya*, and *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*—this last publication

celebrating the project as an architectural wonder. Rostropovich recalls Prokofiev summoning him into his study after receiving medical treatment and playing “two themes from the future festive poem *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don*, which he had written during the procedure in the margins of a newspaper.”⁸⁸ The upbeat press accounts of bulldozers and excavators churning up the land between the rivers lent itself to the invention of an awkwardly sectionalized score combining blustery fanfare motives—some piercingly high in the trumpet—pioneer march strains, luxurious melodies adapted from *Cinderella*, portentous lower brass harmonies, and a series of false endings. In October 1951, Prokofiev robotically informed the readers of the periodical *Novosti* that the subject matter of *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don* had been “prompted by life.”⁸⁹ A month later, he reported in a column in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* dedicated to the “upcoming 35th anniversary of October” that, while working on the score, he thought about “the boundless width of our great rivers, the songs composed about them by the people, and the verses dedicated to them by Russian classic and contemporary poets. I’m attempting to make the music . . . songlike, reflecting that joy of labor that now grips all our people.”⁹⁰ Prokofiev’s score expresses these panegyrics but also allows the listener to imagine hydroelectric station turbines, the operation of the canal’s thirteen locks, and the flowing waters of the conjoined rivers, viewed from a distance. The false endings inadvertently predict the setbacks that delayed the canal’s completion: it officially opened on July 27, 1952, with the passenger ship *Iosif Stalin* making the inaugural fifteen-hour journey, but the construction of dams at Kuybishev and Stalingrad extended into 1954.⁹¹

The Meeting of the Volga and the Don was overshadowed in the press by other works composed about the waterway; these were performed along the banks by national and regional choruses and orchestras with the occasional participation of theater and circus brigades. The grandest work, the choral-orchestral suite *Hail, Volga Don!*, involved three composers—Leonid Bakalov, Konstantin Listov, and Sigizmund Katz—whose professional reputations resided solely in the mass song genre. The refrain of the opening number of the suite, “Maritime Village” (Primorskaya stanitsa), typifies the simplistic sentiment of the whole: “Tsimla, oh Tsimla, Tsimla Sea, Our deeds are good, Our homeland flourishes” (Tsimla, oy Tsimla, Tsimlyanskoye more, Khoroshi u nas dela, Kray tsvetet rodnoy). The verses address the utopian transformation of the former Cossack village of Tsimla into a Soviet canal-side resort. Not to be outdone by *Hail, Volga Don!*, the Voronezh

Russian Folk Ensemble mounted fourteen concerts in homogenized celebration of the “Stalinist builders of Communism” and, by extension, the economic and political might of the Soviet Union—which, according to banners and slogans of the period, disturbed and dismayed Wall Street bankers.⁹² These and other Volga-Don festivities received exaggerated coverage in the six issues of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* that preceded the canal’s official opening.⁹³ Prokofiev’s contribution to the festivities offers little of the mandated joyfulness of the others; he could not, or would not, compete with the displays being mounted at Tsimla.

Prokofiev’s other new work of 1952, the *Sinfonia Concertante* (Symphony Concerto), gradually came into being over three years (up until the time of its premiere, it was titled the Second Cello Concerto; following its premiere, the composer expanded the orchestra’s role, thereupon renaming it the *Sinfonia Concertante*). The 20,000-ruble commission came from Aleksandr Kholodilin, who led the music division of the Committee on Arts Affairs, and it specified a work of three movements for completion by November 1, 1951.⁹⁴ For source material, Prokofiev turned to his First Cello Concerto of 1938, which had not enjoyed success, generating the solo part in consultation with Rostropovich. The common assumption that the two of them worked side by side on the score stems from a single photograph and newspaper report.⁹⁵ It is undone by the primary source evidence, which finds Prokofiev composing the solo and accompanimental parts in relative solitude—and perhaps recalling the recommendations for corrections to the First Cello Concerto that he had received from Pyatigorsky back in 1940. Once the material was drafted, he gave the sketchbooks to Rostropovich for technical correction and refinement, who in turn forwarded them to Atovmyan for orchestration. On August 5, 1951, Atovmyan informed Prokofiev that “I’m sending you the realization of the first movement of the [Second Cello] Concerto with some questions of mine. M. Rostropovich is bringing around the 2nd movement tomorrow.”⁹⁶ On August 25, he explained, “The delay in realizing the Cello Concerto wasn’t my fault. Having begun the realization of the third sketchbook I ran across references to the first sketchbook, which Rostropovich sequestered.... When are you planning to give me the third movement of the Cello Concerto? I want to arrange my work schedule accordingly.”⁹⁷ These letters elicited, on October 4, a wearied response from Prokofiev once again lamenting the sloppiness of Atovmyan’s work. “There are many unclear notes, almost no dynamic markings, and so on. I’m unwell now, ordered to bed and forbidden to work.” Prokofiev adds that he is short on income and

asks how much he will earn for the “Gypsy Fantasy” suite from *The Tale of the Stone Flower*. He concludes, again with his finances in mind, that he had finished sketching *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don*.⁹⁸

The Sinfonia Concertante does not require extended techniques, but it thoroughly tests the cellist's mental and physical stamina, emphasizing high-volume sound production, fingerboard precision (shifts and leaps, chromatic runs, and double stops), sustained phrasing, and rapidly shifting timbres. Muscular exertion is transformed into an expressive device. The antecedent of the opening phrase, for example, requires the soloist to bow exceedingly close to the bridge with the right hand while maintaining an intense vibrato with the left; the consequent of the phrase features large intervallic leaps along a single string of the fingerboard. The leaps demand seamless execution with a single bow stroke, while the ensuing double stops require subtle, rapid adjustments in the spacing between the first and third, and second and fourth fingers along the fingerboard. At times, the soloist must project two voices, transforming a typically monophonic instrument into a homophonic one.

The second movement is the longest, at seventeen minutes, and richest. It expands the technical challenges by obliging the soloist to navigate double-stop sequences as well as long-breathed melodies that incorporate double-stops mid-phrase. The swiftness of these passages makes generating the pitches as written exceedingly problematic; the sound of the soloist's physical exertion with the bow and fingerboard replaces the sound of the notated music. The finale, a variation movement in three parts, eases the strain. The opening theme offers a lyrical outtake from the technical obstacle course of the two preceding movements. The soloist first presents the melody as a single line and subsequently restates it in sixths, then subjects it to variation in a brush-stroke passage that metastasizes in the middle and closing sections of the movement. Pizzicato four-note harmonies and false harmonics characterize subsequent variations. Between measures 207 and 223, the soloist offers a repeat, in thick double stops, of the folklike tune that the orchestra had earlier introduced as a counterbalance to the main theme. The dash to the finish line, commencing at measure 368, involves a sequence of extremely fast, loud arpeggios that—optimally—find the performer overcoming technical limitations through sheer adrenalin.

The Sinfonia Concertante was premiered (as the Second Cello Concerto) on February 18, 1952, at the Moscow Conservatory, with the pianist Richter valiantly conducting the student orchestra while nursing an injury to his

right hand. The soprano Vera Dukhovskaya, a champion of Prokofiev's Pushkin Romances who had been acquainted with the composer since 1927, wept bittersweet tears at the performance: the music, like its creator, seemed uncharacteristically morose to her.⁹⁹

The performance received mixed reviews, but Rostropovich recalled it with great pride. He also provided some unverifiable details about his collaboration with Prokofiev, including being besieged “to compose some of the [solo] passages, but when I did so he always made some small but significant changes, leaving me wondering at how narrow, yet unbridgeable, is the gap between the mundane and the sublime.” There follows an anecdote about the third movement:

Prokofiev incorporated a theme [in the middle section] that was similar to a popular song by Vladimir Zakharov, an apparatchik who mercilessly vilified all “formalists.” After the work was played at the Composers' Union, Zakharov stood up and said indignantly that he would write to the papers complaining that his own wonderful tune had been totally distorted. When I related this to Prokofiev he wrote a replacement tune (a waltz, which I never played), and said that once everything had settled down we could quietly revert to the original tune.¹⁰⁰

If Rostropovich's interpretation of this event were accurate, it would have amounted to payback. Zakharov had in 1945 added music to *Cinderella* for the discarded scene of the Prince's wanderings through Africa without Prokofiev's authorization. But it is not accurate: Zakharov did produce a song with select points in common with Prokofiev's, but a much better rhythmic and melodic match comes from the Minsk arranger and composer Isaak Lyuban. Zakharov's common-time tune, titled “Be of Good Health” (*Bud'te zdorovi*), exists in print from 1939; Lyuban's triple-meter “Our Toast” (*Nash tost*) is dated 1948. Both songs became popular during the war, and both tended to be performed in concert in different variations, a practice good-humoredly reprised by Prokofiev in his score. Zakharov, a Stalin Prize winner, may have complained about the perceived mishandling of his—more likely Lyuban's—tune, but the allusion was not intended as a slight. Rather, it constituted a creative response to Zhdanov's 1948 instruction to Soviet composers to learn from popular music. The effort failed, and Prokofiev agreed to rewrite the offending passage.¹⁰¹

The date of the assessment of the Cello Concerto at the Union of Soviet Composers is unknown; it was reassessed by the Committee on Arts Affairs on August 30. This second review resulted in Rostropovich adding alternate, less demanding solo passages. The transformation of the Second Cello Concerto into the Sinfonia Concertante began on July 23, 1952, and essentially concluded, following a health-related interruption, on September 7, with the composer praising Rostropovich in his diary for his “very good advice concerning concerto performance and the general plan” of the work. Multitasking was now impossible for Prokofiev. Committed to the Sinfonia Concertante, he was forced to decline unceremoniously an offer to compose fifteen minutes of music for a cartoon titled *Flight to the Moon* (*Polyot na lunu*).¹⁰² At other times, such an offer would have fired his imagination; instead, so weakened, he told the filmmakers he was not interested.

Rostropovich returned to Prokofiev's dacha September 20–21 to discuss future projects, their relationship seemingly allowing the composer to relive the freer, itinerant years when he, like the cellist, performed for a living. Prokofiev could not wholly escape the present, however, noting that, “Yesterday [September 21], while strolling with Rostropovich in Nikolina Gora, we suddenly bumped into Khrennikov, his wife, and Yarustovsky. We conversed quite peacefully, even chatted—this appears (at least externally) to be a feature of our relationship.”¹⁰³

The other products of Prokofiev's interactions with Rostropovich went unfinished: these include a Sonata for Unaccompanied Cello in three movements, for which he completed fourteen pages of sketches between 1949 and (predominantly) 1952. The sketches for the second movement comprise a fugue, such as can be found in the Prelude of Bach's Fifth Suite for Unaccompanied Cello in C Minor, which Rostropovich played for Prokofiev at Nikolina Gora. For advice on constructing the fugue, Prokofiev turned to Shebalin, a former student of Myaskovsky and member of Lamm's musical circle who, after the 1948 Resolution, lost his teaching post at the Moscow Conservatory for three years. Shebalin was touted by his students as a master contrapuntalist (he composed several fugues for piano and wrote extensively for solo strings), but he was nonetheless “bewildered” that Prokofiev would turn to him for help. “‘I should be learning from you!’” he exclaimed.¹⁰⁴ The fugue had actually already been drafted, but when Prokofiev showed it to Rostropovich on September 28, 1952, the cellist recommended some fine-tuning. “Rostropovich is sure that after some small changes it will be

a completely respectable fugue,” Prokofiev noted, insecurely, in his diary.¹⁰⁵ Although he left the Sonata for Unaccompanied Cello incomplete, one of Shebalin’s students, Vladimir Blok, managed to assemble a performing version of the C-major opening movement; it was premiered in 1972 in Moscow by Rostropovich’s student Natalya Gutman.

Blok was also involved in the realization of Prokofiev’s final work for cello, a “transparent” Concertino that the composer had conceived immediately following the completion of the *Sinfonia Concertante*.¹⁰⁶ Prokofiev intended to produce a finished manuscript in the spring of 1953; at the time of his death, he had completed the second movement in piano score but had only sketched the first and third movements. The cellist Steven Isserlis provides the details of its genesis:

It was presumably intended as a vehicle for student cellists as much as for Rostropovich himself. It is not a “great” work—it is not trying to be one! It is what it is: tuneful, amusing, appealing. The first movement opens with a brooding melody exploring the darker regions of the cello; the second subject, in complete contrast, brings out the sun. The slow movement is relaxed, lyrical, with perhaps a touch of irony; as in the sonata for cello and piano, one can feel, in the aftermath of the 1948 [Resolution], Prokofiev’s genuine desire to write accessible music mixed with a certain detachment, a musical raised eyebrow. The last movement opens with a gruffly humorous melody taken from the Symphony-Concerto (one of the few major themes from that work not derived from the [First Cello] Concerto, op. 58); the second subject, like that of the first movement, is charming, innocent.¹⁰⁷

Rostropovich completed the first (sonata-allegro) and third (rondo) movements of the Concertino according to his understanding of Prokofiev’s methods and premiered it, with piano accompaniment, on December 29, 1956. Kabalevsky, meanwhile, completed an orchestration that, despite referring to some of the annotations in Prokofiev’s partial manuscript, was decidedly overblown, a violation of the composer’s neoclassical intentions. In 1994, Isserlis approached Blok, who recognized that Kabalevsky’s orchestration was “bad,” about reducing and refining it for chamber ensemble. An eclectic

new version of the Concertino, with Blok's orchestration, was premiered on April 11, 1997, with Isserlis as soloist.¹⁰⁸

Another unfinished project was the Concerto for Two Pianos and Strings in C Major, whose 1951 inspiration, Prokofiev revealed, came from Bach's Concerto for Two Harpsichords and Strings in C Major (BWV 1061).¹⁰⁹ Prokofiev planned to dedicate the work to Vedernikov, who, like Rostropovich and Richter, participated in its formulation. The extant sketches are written both in Prokofiev's and Vedernikov's hands, which complicates the establishment of a chronology for the composition. There exist 65 measures of the opening C-major allegro movement, 101 measures of the middle G-minor andante (many of these just a single line), and 67 measures of the concluding allegretto. Around thirty measures of this last movement are in Vedernikov's hand, the rest in Prokofiev's. The change in the script is marked by a modulation from C major to E-flat major and by a deterioration in penmanship: compared to Vedernikov's script, Prokofiev's looks shaky. No orchestral indications are shown, except for one or two places indicating first violin.¹¹⁰

Prokofiev suspended work on the Concerto for Two Pianos in the fall of 1952 and directed his dwindling energies to another, greater project. The sketches for this and his other unfinished works are projections, pointing to a finished opus whose size and scope cannot be determined. (Prokofiev seldom outlined a piece on paper before beginning to compose.) The move back to Bach—to the enduring, unsullied musical landscape the eighteenth-century composer stereotypically emblemized—was to have been Prokofiev's concluding musical statement. The extant traces of that project are much less reminders of Bach, however, than of the openness, the imminent potential that Prokofiev saw in each of his sketches. He replaces the spiritual symbol of intricate counterpoint with another: the unrefined musical thoughts attributed to divine inspiration.

Noting how much Prokofiev seemed to be rushing to produce in his last days, Mira quoted him as saying, "But I could have written so much more."¹¹¹ The body, he knew, could no longer serve the spirit. The manuscripts of his finished and unfinished late works, particularly the manuscripts for *The Tale of the Stone Flower*, sometimes include in the margins Prokofiev's daily readings of his temperature and blood pressure—a painful detail that literally realizes the metaphor of work as lifeblood.

Kutuzov's Three Measures

The opera *War and Peace* had not been staged when the nation needed it. After 1945, it disintegrated into segments, which Prokofiev either removed, replaced, or rewrote to accord with ideological demands. His career-long effort to stage his dramatic works became a satire of itself as he was forced to haggle at smaller and smaller levels of detail over the representation of individual characters, the relationship between the war and peace scenes, the structure of the ballroom episode, the function of the chorus, and ultimately, the melodic writing in Kutuzov's climactic aria. The story of Prokofiev's Soviet years concludes, bathetically, with three measures of *War and Peace*, a snippet of a massive score that had dominated his thoughts for a dozen years, and that he still hoped to see staged in its entirety.

Based on the results of the December 4, 1948, assessment of Part II of the opera at Malegot, Prokofiev had begun a radical compression of the score from a two-evening (thirteen-scene) event into ten scenes performed in a single evening. A letter from May 28, 1949, to the Malegot conductor Eduard Grikurov illustrates both the coarseness of the changes and Prokofiev's willingness to accommodate the demands of his various interlocutors, even when those demands conflicted with each other. The letter finds him wishing entire sections of *War and Peace* out of existence:

I agree with your proposal to exclude the scene at Dolokhov's. Samuil Abramovich [Samosud] is less in agreement with this, since he finds that the scene is needed in order to show the "golden" youth of that time and to justify the following scene at [Mariya] Akhrosimov's.

I am not against the reductions to the Borodino and Shevardino Redoubt scenes. The Borodino scene leaves out the refugees and Pierre's part. In the concluding scene the episode between Pierre and Karatayev (from [394] to [398]) and the episode with the partisans (from [412] to [419]) are cut. I would prefer to eliminate all of Pierre's reflections on Hélène and the others, but then it seemed to me that they need to be preserved in order to determine the fate of the characters. However, if you find that this last scene is not abbreviated enough, then please express your views.

Prokofiev next remarks that, despite the elimination of scene 11 (“Moscow Aflame”), he valued the “patriotism and aspiration” of the concluding chorus and hoped to hear it somewhere in the Malegot staging. The changes to the entire opera would be shown in the new edition of the piano score that he was just completing, including “Natasha’s new romance and Andrey’s monologue, reworked as an aria.”¹¹² Prokofiev appends that “this piano score can serve as the basis for the abbreviated version” of *War and Peace*, but that he would nonetheless “be very glad to hear further suggestions” from Grikurov.¹¹³

Grikurov did not move forward with the score, since neither the Composers’ Union nor the Committee on Arts Affairs had vetted the changes. Prokofiev’s last substantive talks with the two organizations about *War and Peace* came on February 10, 1950, and sent him into a fury. He was told that plans for the premiere of the truncated ten-scene version would be delayed until after the “staging of several operas on a contemporary subject.” Prokofiev fired back in frustration: “What would you have me do, burn the opera?”¹¹⁴ The bureaucrats mollified him with the platitudinous promise that Malegot would eventually stage the opera. The ensuing silence from the theater caused the composer terrible anxiety, as evidenced by his July 4, 1950, letter to Atovmyan, who helped assemble the new edition of both the piano and orchestral scores. Prokofiev twice requests assurance that *War and Peace* had, in fact, entered the Malegot repertoire plan:

Will you be at the Malegot performances and meeting with Grikurov? It would be good to find out from him if *War and Peace* is part of the plan for the upcoming season (at the Arts Committee they said that it will be performed in the fall while other operas are running). If it won’t be performed, try to find out the reasons. This issue worries me. Samosud related that Malegot sent a request to the Committee in the spring for permission to stage the opera. The Committee even said to me during the winter that it will be performed this fall, after several other operas are staged. If *War and Peace* is not included in the plan, I’d like to find out the reasons.¹¹⁵

Prokofiev never did find out, and hopes for a staging faded until the fall of 1952, at which time Samosud, perhaps nudged by Fadeyev, began the

tedious process of arranging a performance for State Radio.¹¹⁶ The administration of the Stanislavsky Theater also showed interest in producing the opera. On October 14, Prokofiev took a break from his Concerto for Two Pianos to orchestrate the three sections of *War and Peace* that existed only in piano score.¹¹⁷ By this point, the Composers' Union had given its blessing to the two scenes ("New Year's Eve Ball" and "A Hut in Fili") that Prokofiev had added to the opera between 1945 and 1947, but the Committee on Arts Affairs—the greater obstacle to his plans—had not. Prokofiev believed that the Committee "stood in the way of *War and Peace*" out of a general "fear to permit anything" to be performed. He further grumbled that Kabalevsky, who had promised to speak on behalf of the opera to the Committee, had disappeared to China on a cultural exchange.¹¹⁸

Samosud nonetheless assured Prokofiev of his intentions to conduct the work for State Radio but annoyed him by advising that scene 10, "A Hut in Fili," needed to be reordered. Prokofiev reminded the conductor that *War and Peace* was an opera, not a film score: its parts could not be interchanged. But Samosud stood his ground, and Prokofiev gave way. "The most objectionable" part of the task involved sitting down "for the third time" with Kutuzov's aria to rewrite the trio middle section. He completed the task "with a feeling of loathing" and enlisted Vedernikov to attend to the rest of the changes in the scene.¹¹⁹ This was by no means the end of the matter; the conductor also asked for Kutuzov's vocal lines to be transposed down a tone to accommodate the bass, Boris Dobrin, who was learning the part. Other irksome requests would follow.

Although he resented making the changes, Prokofiev conceded that they enhanced the dramatic potential of scene 10. By expanding Kutuzov's aria, he ensured that it stood above and apart from every other vocal number in the score. The aria completed the elevation of the character into the role of omniscient historical commentator, with Kutuzov absorbing something of the wisdom of Tolstoy's pedagogical epilogue to *War and Peace*. Tolstoy is not the sole source for the lyrics. During the process of revision, Prokofiev consulted an 1814 Kutuzov biography, which Mira procured from the Moscow branch of the Tolstoy Museum. He took part of the text of the aria—including Kutuzov's ominous prediction of the scattering of enemy bones throughout the Russian lands—directly from its pages.

Samosud conducted scene 10 for State Radio on February 4, 1953, the first phase of his effort to arrange a performance of the entire opera. Separate broadcasts of scene 1 (depicting Andrey at the Rostov estate in Otradnoye),

scene 2 (the ball), and scene 12 (Andrey's death) took place over the course of the year.¹²⁰ The creative process came to an ignominious end. Samosud argued with Prokofiev over three measures in Kutuzov's aria, complaining they did not match the style of the whole.¹²¹ The composer believed that they did. The dispute, emblematic of the tremendous effort that Prokofiev had to put into the slightest of activities, went unresolved for almost three weeks. Finally Prokofiev asked Rostropovich and Vedernikov to decide between the two versions. Unsurprisingly, they chose his. The issue settled, Prokofiev orchestrated the aria and consigned the opera to posterity, leaving it to future artists to restore to life. He managed, against all odds, to bring his career to a close with a masterpiece—battle-scarred and ragged, but a masterpiece nonetheless.

The life of the opera ended up being true to the life of its source text (between 1866 and 1886, Tolstoy published six editions of his ever-expanding novel under his own supervision). For all the reworking, the music maintains remarkable cohesiveness, robustly enduring sanctioned and nonsanctioned interventions. The porousness of its construction exposes a beguiling contradiction in Prokofiev's creativity: his meticulous attention to detail, manifest in his emblematic defense of the middle section of Kutuzov's aria, but also his pragmatism, his acceptance that the opera would inevitably be altered, even at the expense of his own favorite passages.

The End and the Beginning

In late February and early March, Mira began to notice a change in Prokofiev's mood. He complained that his "soul hurt" and did not respond when she assured him that they would be together "until age ninety."¹²² Instead, he urged her to put his affairs in order. His caregiver, physician-therapist, and driver also sensed the change. On March 5, Prokofiev omitted his usual morning stroll in the neighborhood surrounding the Moscow apartment and asked to be taken to the Central (Russian) State Archive of Literature and Art to retrieve a manuscript from his personal holdings there. He also sent a copy of the revised version of his Fifth Piano Sonata to Muzfond, requesting that the score be entrusted to the same copyist who had worked on the original version. Until the end, his fastidious precision did not waver. In the early evening, between 6 and 8, Mira read to him from a collection of reminiscences about Gogol. He went to his room to rest, but then reemerged, lurching from side to side in the midst of a cerebral hemorrhage. Mira summoned his caregiver (she was not immediately available) and physician-therapist; her

father returned home to help comfort Prokofiev as Mira made additional calls to Syvatoslav and Oleg. "He was on the divan," Abram recalled, "I tried to cover him, since he was feverish.... He began to complain of a fierce headache and asked if the doctor was coming soon. He asked for water with lemon and became nauseous."¹²³ Mira erroneously trusted that an ambulance would soon arrive. By the time Prokofiev's sons came to the apartment, he had died. Friends and colleagues gathered over the course of the evening.

In her account of these events, Mira emphasized that Prokofiev worked even on the last day of his life. His own chronicle of his work ends four days before, on March 1. That afternoon, he wrote, Stuchevsky stopped by the apartment to pester him about "coarsening" the orchestration of *The Tale of the Stone Flower* with additional instruments in the climactic passages. Prokofiev resisted, complaining that the request was nonsensical. Nevertheless he sat down to work and managed to find something positive in the negative task. "At first it was truly offensive," he wrote, "but by the end it became easier and I completed a few pages."¹²⁴

Prokofiev's brief diary ends here.



Prokofiev died on the same day, purportedly within the same evening hour, as did Stalin. This incongruous historical coincidence has a certain mystical appeal, but its accuracy cannot be vouchsafed owing to an absence of documentation about the circumstances of the Soviet ruler's death and the three-day coma that preceded it. The report of Stalin's March 5 demise was greeted as a national disaster by those who viewed him as a benevolent guardian and defender of the nation, and by those who feared the loss of their positions within the totalitarian establishment. Turmoil spread through the Communist Party and the government it operated; tearful throngs gathered inside and outside the Hall of Columns, where Stalin's body rested on a flower-encrusted catafalque for four days. Party leaders, emissaries from the republics, officials from the trade unions, and artists stood in the honor guard. Teachers interrupted their classes with the news; factories came to a halt. People were crushed trying to obtain a glimpse of the bier. According to one account, Rostropovich's sister Veronika, a violinist with the Moscow Philharmonic summarily dispatched to the Hall of Columns to provide background music for the viewing, wept the whole day. "When her comrades tried to calm her, she began to sob even more," protesting, after several hours of agony, "'Just leave me alone. I'm not weeping for Stalin, but Prokofiev.'" ¹²⁵

The State-sponsored, round-the-clock hysteria about Stalin's demise greatly slowed the spread of the news about Prokofiev. *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* published two obituaries on page 4 of its March 18, 1953, issue, thirteen days after the composer's death. The first, titled "An Outstanding Soviet Composer" (*Vidayushchiysya sovetский kompozitor*), was signed by twenty-seven cultural officials and artists, a precise hierarchical sequence that included the chairman of the recently disbanded Committee on Arts Affairs (Bespalov), the General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers (Khrennikov), the editor of *Sovetskaya muzika*, the principal of the Moscow Conservatory, elder statesmen, and Stalin Prize winners. The second obituary, titled "A Grand Creative Life" (*Bol'shaya tvorcheskaya zhizn'*), was written by Kabalevsky.¹²⁶ The *New York Times* announced Prokofiev's passing earlier, on March 9 (the article is dated March 8), inaccurately stating that Prokofiev died at Nikolina Gora, rather than in the communal apartment of his economist father-in-law.¹²⁷ A follow-up article on March 15 misreports the date of Prokofiev's death (March 4) and the year of Zhdanov's ideological crackdown on Soviet music (1946). Deriding Zhdanov for his "monumental folly," the author of this article, Olin Downes, eulogized Prokofiev as "one of the born music-makers whose problem it was to prune the luxuriance of his invention and imagination rather than to stimulate it." Downes asked: "How far did he succeed in his restless explorations, his endless experiments (sometimes quite mad ones), the indubitable masterpieces that resulted from his magnificent research? The future will estimate him as we cannot."¹²⁸

The March 7 memorial service at the House of Composers (*Dom kompozitorov*) was a modest affair. Khrennikov attended to the logistics. Shostakovich spoke; Oistrakh performed two movements from the 1946 Violin Sonata; the pianist Samuil Feynberg, Oistrakh's accompanist, performed additional pieces by Bach. Fifteen people attended Prokofiev's interment at Novodevichye cemetery. Flowers were in short supply in Moscow; a photograph of the deceased composer preserved at the Russian State Archive of Documentary Film and Photography in Krasnogorsk shows the casket surrounded by potted plants. These had been brought by a sympathetic neighbor to the memorial service from her apartment, the blooms alive rather than dead.¹²⁹ The composer Alfred Schnittke reimagined the funeral procession from a later, safer position in the twentieth century: "Along an almost deserted street that ran parallel to the seething mass hysterically mourning the passing of Stalin, there moved in the opposite direction a small group of people bearing on their shoulders the coffin of the greatest Russian

composer of the time....I regard this picture as symbolic. To move against the tide in those days was hopeless. Yet even then there was—just as in earlier ages—the possibility of a choice between two decisions, only one of which was right.”¹³⁰ However fanciful—some of Prokofiev’s pallbearers, Atovmyan included, were true political insiders—Schnittke’s *glasnost*-era sentiments are apt. Prokofiev resisted the current in death as in life.

Lavrovsky, one of the last artists to work with Prokofiev, marked the events of early March in his diary as follows: “Thursday, March 5. S. S. Prokofiev has died. He didn’t manage to finish his work on his last ballet *The Tale of the Stone Flower*. It’s all very, very sorrowful.”¹³¹ Two days later the choreographer went to Novodevichye cemetery for Prokofiev’s interment and, two days after that, to Red Square to pay respects to Stalin. Work continued on the ballet, although in the composer’s absence it became less a paean to the labor of art and more a study, in fairy-tale guise, of creative paralysis. Lavrovsky, whose burdens included a painful divorce, felt listless and morose: “It’s all very complicated and irrelevant, but *what a spectacle* has to be staged!” (March 2). “I went to work in the theater. No one there—no news about the apartment and the notification. Trying not to think about it. I’m rushing everything, rushing myself, but *where?*” (March 16). “Can I cope with this work? It will be what it desires to be” (March 27). “Awful weather. Mood likewise. Headache. I pondered Severyan and Katerina’s scene” (March 30). “In the evening I staged Severyan’s entrance and his attentions to Katerina. Nothing worked out. Tomorrow I could stage Katerina’s scene, but it’s not ready, I’m behind” (April 2). “I didn’t work this evening; I don’t feel well” (April 9).¹³²

The Tale of the Stone Flower was assessed twice more by the administration of the Bolshoy Theater—on December 30, 1953, and again on February 3, 1954—and twice found wanting. (For his procrastination with the ballet, and for his ineptitude and malfeasance in general, Anisimov would be ousted from the Bolshoy Theater in 1954.) The complaints centered on the amount of repetition, the opacity of the prologue, the “automatic” and “uninspired” betrothal scene, and the emphasis on Katerina over Danila in the finale. Rostislav Zakharov (the choreographer of the 1945 Moscow premiere of *Cinderella* and one of attendees at the 1948 run-through of *A Story of a Real Man*) scorned the perceived sameness of the music in the first act of the ballet and lamented that it had not been rewritten. His opinion was echoed by the conductor Aleksandr Melik-Pashayev, who discussed what he liked and disliked about the score before allowing that Prokofiev stood in the “first rank” of Soviet composers.

"A few changes could be made," he muttered, before conceding that "since Sergey Sergeyevich is unfortunately not among us," it should be performed as is.¹³³ The ballet was premiered on February 12, 1954, with Fayer conducting.

The paralysis in the Soviet cultural sphere that grievously encumbered *The Tale of the Stone Flower* persisted through Khrushchev's ascent to power and 1956 secret speech denouncing high Stalinism. Prokofiev's *War and Peace* and *A Story of a Real Man* eventually made it to the Soviet stage, albeit in decidedly abbreviated versions. (The October 8, 1960, Bolshoy Theater premiere of *A Story of a Real Man* featured Mira's rewritten, de-Stalinized libretto, massive cuts—the act 1 overture altogether disappeared, as did entire blocks of declamation—and illogically reordered scenes.) Prokofiev's remembrance involved the arrangement of a pension of 700 rubles a month for Mira; the fixing of memorial plaques to his two principal residences in Moscow, the dacha in Nikolina Gora, and his Sontsovka birthplace; the manufacturing of souvenirs bearing his likeness (calendars, posters, postage stamps, and silver coins); the awarding of the Lenin Prize for the Seventh Symphony in 1957; the planning of festivals in his honor in 1961 and 1991 (the former scrapped, the latter hobbled by the collapse of the Soviet Union); and the publication of select works by an editorial commission headed by Kabalevsky between 1955 and 1967.¹³⁴ Prokofiev's manuscripts, along with the documentation about his professional and personal life, were distributed into several archives, a typical Soviet practice that prevents a complete picture of his compositional achievement from being readily perceived. Carefully vetted editions of his autobiographical writings and his articles for the Soviet and foreign press appeared in 1961 and 1965; these volumes, which include select correspondence and reminiscences by his colleagues, have been consulted, where appropriate, throughout this book. *Sovetskaya muzika* devoted a section of the March 1958 issue to the commemoration of the fifth anniversary of Prokofiev's death, parts of issues in 1962, 1963, 1966, 1967, and 1968 "to the study of S. S. Prokofiev's work," parts of the April 1971 and April 1981 issues in honor of his eightieth and ninetieth birthdays, and the entire April 1991 issue in honor of his centennial. Separate editions of the scores for *Eugene Onegin* and *Boris Godunov* were issued in 1973 and 1983 under the editorship of Elizaveta Dattel, who downplayed the crucial role of the discredited Krzhizhanovsky and repressed Meyerhold in attempting to stage them. The composer's legacy was preserved in order to be controlled, the memory of his life and work carefully constructed by those who came after him. During the Khrushchev and Brezhnev periods, Khrennikov did

the most to memorialize Prokofiev, including fighting resistant and resentful bureaucrats to ensure that Prokofiev's first wife, Lina, received comparable pension and housing privileges as did his second wife, Mira. In general, cultural officials planned much more than they achieved on Prokofiev's behalf, except when it came to demonstrating their own power.

The full measure of Prokofiev's contribution to twentieth-century music remains to be taken, since some of his output is unpublished, the most obvious examples being his scores for *Kotovsky*, *Lermontov*, *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*, and *Tonya*. Certain works are presumed lost—one can only access the complete score for *Lieutenant Kizhe* by listening to the film; the manuscript, like the title character of that film, is missing—as are numerous source documents, including Nina Sakonskaya's original, rejected verses for *Peter and the Wolf*. The orchestration of the music for *Cinderella* has not been entirely restored to its original, intended state (the current performing edition reflects the alterations made in 1945 for the Bolshoy Theater premiere), nor has the orchestration and ordering of the numbers of either the 1935 or 1938 versions of *Romeo and Juliet*.¹³⁵ The two ballets maintain a place in the repertoire despite changes made to the music against the composer's wishes. Perhaps the most crucial need is a *complete* edition of his works, built up from the autograph manuscripts and pinpointing the date and circumstances of their revision, however complex. Regrettably, the quality of recent critical editions, especially *Ivan the Terrible*, leaves the work to be done again.

Prokofiev was not a victim of the Stalinist regime in the sense that his first wife and numerous friends and colleagues were victims: his decision to relocate to Moscow from Paris in 1936 was free and fateful rather than fatal. Hindsight makes the decision difficult to understand, but it bore its own pressured, inopportune logic. Additional details about that move—the specific nature of Atovmyan's relationship to the NKID, and the timeline of Prokofiev's meetings with Potyomkin—will doubtless come to light. As the example of *War and Peace* demonstrates, his talent arguably overcame and sometimes benefited from outside control, undermining the Western musicological assumption that Soviet artists were always passive victims of brutal, crude, and rigid politics. A case could be made for staging the cohesive 1942 score of *War and Peace*, just as it has been made for the original 1869 version of Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, but producing the 1942 score would result in the jettisoning of resplendent dance music of markedly apolitical character. Soviet scholars, notably Anatoliy Volkov, recognized what Prokofiev had to accommodate, reconceive, and reconfigure, and their findings should not be casually

dismissed.¹³⁶ Nor can the fact that Prokofiev responded to political command, wartime dislocation, and declining health with music of great affective power but disquieting messages, *Zdravitsa* being the most blatant example.

The post-1948 works remain obscure. These, more than the pre-1948 works, are witness to a creative decline and penchant for self-censorship that illustrates the extent to which the consciousness of an artist cannot be separated from the consciousness of his surroundings. Thus Prokofiev retreated in the final months of his life, finding musical models in the past. He sought a structural perfection that, in the language of Christian Science, illustrates "Life's spiritual ideal."¹³⁷ That ideal, perceived before his relocation to Moscow, manifested itself in the large- and small-scale scores conceived afterward, from the first version of *Romeo and Juliet* to the last version of *The Tale of the Stone Flower*, whose heroes and heroines exit the constraints of their existences, recognizing that "the visible universe and material man are the poor counterfeits of the invisible universe and spiritual man." The simplification of Prokofiev's musical syntax in the 1930s suggests a striving for the harmoniousness that was, in accord with his newfound spiritual outlook, "the truth of being." As Prokofiev expressed it enthusiastically to a Christian Science practitioner in a letter from January 31, 1933, "Christian Science is helping me enormously in my music. To [put it] more exactly, I do not see any more [of] my work outside of Science."¹³⁸

Prokofiev thus joined that long list of astonishingly productive artists who died in dismal circumstances, leaving his work suspended and predestined for incompleteness. His greatest creations, those spared the pressures of Committee on Arts Affairs deadlines and Union of Soviet Composers protocols, maintain a place in the orchestral and theatrical repertoire even as that repertoire shrinks, ceding to the popular idioms from which it sprang. Recent performances and recordings of Prokofiev's lesser-known works, the ongoing Russian- and English-language publication of his diaries and autobiographical writings, and continued scholarly attention attest to his enduring appeal. And here one confronts, in all its oddness, the twist of fate that brought a Christian Scientist home to Stalin's Russia. Much as Christian Science urged its believers to look toward the light, so did the positive—or, to invoke a Soviet cliché, "life-affirming"—sentiments of Prokofiev's music privilege exhilarated listener engagement. Even as his career turned tragic, his works celebrated, on their own terms, a state of happiness.

Prokofiev did not want to be like his times; rather, his times wanted to be like him.

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Appendix A

The Original Scenario of *Romeo and Juliet*

RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 66, ll. 1–10.

The original scenario, dated May 16, 1935, was written by Prokofiev in consultation with Radlov in Leningrad. The archival file contains the original handwritten scenario with the act 4 happy ending, and then two typewritten revisions, without the happy ending. The text shown in square brackets is from the revisions to the scenario. Strike-throughs designate text from the original version that Prokofiev either reworked or replaced in the revisions. The durations are from both the draft scenario and the draft score.

1. Introduction

2 minutes and 20 seconds

Act 1

Scene 1: The Street

2. Romeo [Early morning. Romeo passes by, very pensive. Perhaps some female passers-by seek to halt him, but he pays no notice.]

1 minute

3. Entrances, meetings, disputes. Sustained music. [The stragglers return home. The mood is inoffensive. Unexpectedly (on the last chord) someone flings an orange and smashes a window.]

1 minute and 10 seconds

4. Servants [and citizens] quarrel (not too hotheaded; socks on the jaw). It gets interrupted.

1½ minutes

5. Brawl (hotheaded). [Knights with weapons; general mayhem.] Toward the end, the Prince of Verona enters [on a horse], and the brawl ceases.

2½ minutes

6. The Prince's edict [his first gesture]; in response, the weapons are dropped. [His second gesture]; in response, the elders leave to meet [perhaps someone falls to his knees].

1¼ minutes

7. The Prince departs. Interlude [between the scenes, expressing the Prince's power. Symphonic and military orchestras. Costumed members of the military orchestra could escort the Prince in front of the curtain.]

1 minute and 20 seconds

Scene 2: House of the Capulets

8. Servants [preparing for a ball]; a lead5en scherzo.

1¼–1½ minutes

9. Juliet's entrance with her nursemaid; she dashes in (her C-major theme, but not immediately). [Just fourteen years old, she girl-ishly jokes and pranks, unwilling to dress for the ball. The nursemaid nevertheless gets her into a gown. Juliet stands before a mirror and sees a young woman. She briefly muses, and then dashes out.]

2½ minutes

10. Arrival of the guests (a slow, nondance minuet). [The guests arrive, wearing large mantles and shawls. The dance is mounted as they unwrap and remove their shawls. The guests gradually descend into the interior of the room.]

3 minutes

11. Entrance of Romeo, Benvolio, and Mercutio [in masks]. A march [Mercutio and Benvolio joke]; Romeo is pensive (8 measures).

2–2¼ minutes

12. In the interior a curtain [portière] is opened: A) a ponderous dance [for the knights, perhaps in armor]; B) Juliet dances with Paris [ceremoniously and indifferently]; C) return of the ponderous dance (in lighter guise, ending heavily). Romeo sees Juliet and pursues her [he is smitten].

4¼ minutes

13. Mercutio's dance, somewhat buffoonish (certainly in 3/4). [He enlivens the gathering.]

1¾ to 2 minutes

14. Romeo and Juliet's madrigal. [Romeo dances amorously, and Juliet playfully. Romeo dances more ardently than before; Juliet remains playful. They dance together, tenderly. Juliet untangles herself from Romeo and teasingly dashes out.]

2½ minutes

15. Tybalt *sees* [recognizes] Romeo. [A Capulet subdues Tybalt. He becomes enraged; the Capulet subdues him once more.] Mercutio and the Capulets escort him out.

1½ minutes

16. Gavotte. The guests disperse. ~~It becomes quiet~~ [The stage clears;] the candles are extinguished.

3-3½ minutes

17. [The half-darkened, empty hall. Juliet returns, perhaps in her nightclothes, looking for the kerchief or flower she dropped during her encounter with Romeo].

1 minute and 20 seconds

18. Romeo appears [from behind a column; Juliet blushes]. *Adagio* [Amorous dance; the nursemaid perhaps appears and advises Romeo to leave.]

4½ minutes

[Nos. 17-18 correspond to Shakespeare's balcony scene. If the theater has the means to change the décor instantly, then these numbers could be offered as a balcony scene.]

Act 2

Scene 1: The Square [The entire scene represents a folk celebration, against which the separate episodes occur.]

19. Tarantella

3 minutes

20. Cheerful and animated, Romeo enters [thinking about Juliet] to the first theme of the madrigal (16 measures). Mercutio greets [and teases] Romeo (from Mercutio's dance, No. 13 in act 1).

2 minutes

21. [The celebration continues.] Dance of the Five Pairs: 1) quickly, in 2/4 meter; [small,] diminutive movements; 2) a march (winds only); [a cheerful procession passes by on the street]; 3) return to the diminutive movements.

3½ minutes

22. Nursemaid (C major in 4/4 meter). [The Nursemaid seeks out Romeo on Juliet's instruction.]

2 minutes

23. Mercutio, concealing Romeo, exchanges bows with the Nursemaid [and teases her].

55 seconds

24. ~~Romeo receives the ring and runs out (to the theme of the young Juliet).~~ The Nurse gives Romeo Juliet's ring; Romeo, excited, dashes out.

½ minute

25. General dance (including the Nursemaid and Mercutio) based on the Tarantella, though more intoxicated and featuring more varied accentuation, transitioning into the march [(a jocular procession)] from No. 21, but with the complete orchestra. The curtain descends.

2½ minutes

Scene 2: At Friar Laurence's

26. ~~Interlude and arrival at Friar Laurence's (to his music). Romeo enters: "why was I asked here?" Laurence does not immediately answer; Romeo persists. Laurence brings Juliet in (wearing pure white). [Laurence (who walks rather than dances); Romeo enters; Laurence opens the inner doors and admits Juliet. Dressed in pure white, she embodies virginity.]~~

2 minutes and 10 seconds

27. Romeo and Juliet look each other in the eye; Laurence departs. Romeo and Juliet embrace but scamper back to their places upon Laurence's return. They kneel before him; he conducts the wedding ceremony. [Curtain. The rest of the music in this episode is for the scene change. Pairs of carnival revelers process along the proscenium in front of the descended curtain.]

2 minutes

~~Curtain (1/2 minute interlude from the preceding interlude, and 1/2 minute of the diminutive movements from No. 21).~~

Scene 3: The Square (décor from scene 1 of this act).

28. Dance of the Five Pairs (see No. 21).

1½ minutes [3 minutes including the curtain music]

29. Appearance of Mercutio and Benvolio with girls. The scene begins with a dance comparable to No. 19; the dance breaks off in dramatic fashion when Tybalt enters and bumps up against Mercutio.

1¾ minutes

30. Tybalt's ~~quarrel~~ [duel] with Mercutio and Romeo. 1) Tybalt and Mercutio stare at each other like bulls (a tremolo in the orchestra; their blood boils). The ~~combat~~ [duel] begins. 2) Romeo enters to a theme from the Friar's cell; 3) Tybalt throws down a glove; Romeo returns it to him[, not accepting the challenge]. ~~Tybalt brandishes his sword; Romeo responds in kind.~~ Mercutio throws himself at Tybalt.
1 ½ minutes
31. Tybalt's ~~combat~~ [duel] with Mercutio (sustained; i.e., the rhythmic underpinning against which Romeo's reactions are depicted is unbroken). [On the last chord of this number] Mercutio is wounded—pathos, a grand pause.
1 minute and 20 seconds
32. [Tybalt flees.] Mercutio dying (the death theme perhaps as a minor-key trio): 1) Expressive music [he jokes before his death]; 2) The march from No. 11, at times rhythmically formalized. Mercutio dies [at the end of the number]; a brief pause.
2 ½ minutes
33. Benvolio throws himself at the pensive Romeo with a wail [Romeo decides to avenge Mercutio's death]. ~~Build-up to the combat. Tybalt is killed; this time there is no pause.~~ [Tybalt enters. Romeo combats him. In contrast to Tybalt's duel with Mercutio, where the combatants fail to consider the seriousness of the situation and fight out of youthful ardor, Romeo and Tybalt battle fiercely, to the death. Romeo kills Tybalt.]
2 minutes
34. The stage fills; Benvolio, suddenly energized, wraps Romeo in a cloak and pushes him out[: "flee!"]. The Capulets ~~run in, fall to their knees before Tybalt's body in grief~~ [grieve for Tybalt] and promise vengeance. [A procession with Tybalt's body.] Musically, this number is undivided; it comprises an intensification of the tragic pulsation (the Prince's music is absent here).
1 minute and 25 seconds
TOTAL: 33 minutes

Act 3

Scene 1: Juliet's Bedchamber [Unlike the previous act, which occurs on the square, the third act unfolds in rooms. Accordingly, the orchestration is more chamber-like.]

35. Introduction ~~on the Prince's threatening music~~ [recalling the Prince's power over Romeo's destiny] (see No. 6).
1 minute and 10 seconds

36. Curtain. Predawn haziness. Romeo and Juliet behind the bed curtain (from No. 29). [In order to avoid a misleading impression, the composer attempted to make the music clean and bright.]

1 minute and 20 seconds

37. Pas de deux (the nursemaid at the end). [Romeo and Juliet's farewell before their parting. At the end of the number Romeo departs.]

4½–4¾ minutes

38. The nursemaid forewarns Juliet that her parents and Paris are coming; Juliet goes behind the bed curtain to change. They enter and report to Juliet that Paris is her suitor (he presents her with a bouquet). The music: ½-minute approach to the minuet from No. 10, modestly scored, lasting 1 minute.

2 minutes

39. Juliet's hysteria. ~~Her father shows Paris the door and rushes to her (her father remains to some extent comically good-natured).~~ [Juliet does not want to marry Paris; she weeps; she becomes angry. She is small, powerless, and despondent. During this scene her parents gingerly move Paris away. Juliet's father orders her to marry Paris, "or you are not my daughter." Her parents exit.] The music: 1 minute hysteria; 1 minute of Juliet with her father.

2 minutes

40. ~~Juliet's father and mother (and the nursemaid) exit.~~ [Juliet alone. She decides to go to Laurence. Curtain.]

1½ minutes

41. ~~The room is vacated (½ minute); interlude (1 minute); Juliet goes to Laurence; she wants to stab herself (½ minute).~~ [Interlude for change of decor.]

1 minute and 20 seconds

Scene 2: At Friar Laurence's

42. Laurence suggests the sleeping potion (No. 26). Juliet's preparedness, calmness, even elation. [Juliet leaves, having become a tragic figure.]

3¾ minutes

43. Interlude [for change of decor].

1 minute and 20 seconds

Scene 3: Juliet's Bedchamber Again

44. [Juliet informs her parents of her preparedness to marry Paris.] Juliet, her mother, and her girlfriends fit the wedding dress. Juliet

dispatches everyone, respectfully kissing her mother's hands (the music from No. 12: Juliet and Paris).

1 ¼–1 ½ minutes

45. Juliet alone with her hourglass: the death theme. [Dance with the poison: "I drink for you, Romeo!"] She ~~drinks the poison, instantly~~ *feels* [drinks, becomes drowsy, drinks twice more, weakens] and falls onto her bed [(or just short of it)], pulling down the bed curtain ($1\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}$ minutes of expiring and $\frac{1}{2}$ minute with the stage empty).

4 minutes

46. [The quiet, happy sound of a mandolin orchestra is heard from the wings.] Entrance of Paris and others to (and with) an orchestra of mandolins and trumpets, followed by pizzicato orchestral chords and the trio from No. 10. [According to custom, Paris comes with a gift-bearing retinue to rouse his bride on the day of their wedding.]

1 minute and 25 seconds

47. [Paris has brought an emerald.] Dance of the four ~~Syrian~~ [Antilles] girls [with an emerald].

1 minute and 50 seconds

48. [Paris bestows carpets.] Dance of the three Moors [with carpets].

1 minute and 40 seconds

49. [Paris bestows various contraband goods.] Dance of the two ~~Captains~~ [Pirates] to mandolins. [A small orchestra on the stage: mandolins, trumpets, a clarinet, a violin. The symphonic orchestra supplements it.]

1 minute and 40 seconds

50. [Worry that Juliet has not reacted.] Juliet's mother and nursemaid attempt to rouse Juliet ($\frac{1}{2}$ minute); she is dead ($\frac{1}{2}$ -minute conclusion).

1–1 ½ minutes

TOTAL: 23 ¾–26 minutes

Act 4

51. Curtain (the music follows the pause). Romeo enters and dispatches the servant (1 minute and 40 seconds). He pulls back the cover on Juliet's bed, looks at her (20 seconds), and dances (1 minute). He wants to stab himself, but Laurence, entering, stops him. Laurence struggles with Romeo after a preparatory chord, during a pause.

4 ½ minutes

52. Juliet begins to breathe.
 $\frac{3}{4}$ –1 minute
53. Laurence strikes a gong. Romeo at first moves to embrace Laurence, but then embraces Juliet. He carries her into a grove.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ minute–40 seconds
54. The stage fills with people. They seek to embrace Laurence, who gestures for them to look toward the lovers.
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ –2 minutes
55. Entrance of Romeo and Juliet. Juliet slowly comes to herself (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes for the awakening of Juliet before Romeo's appearance). Romeo begins to dance with the reviving Juliet. Everything in their movement reflects their mood. The music is bright, but it does not attain a forte.
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ –2 $\frac{1}{2}$ minutes
56. [Unscripted.]
3 minutes and 20 seconds
TOTAL: 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ minutes

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Appendix B

The *Tonya* Cue Sheet

RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 104, ll. 1-4.

l. 1:

The Musical Plan:

Introduction; orchestra and titles/80-45 seconds

Public garden/140-120 seconds

Inset titles/ $3 \times 15 = 45$ seconds

Transitions between scenes/ $3 \times 8 = 24$ seconds

Accents for the dramatic situation (when Tonya is left at the station)/100-80 seconds

German arrival at the station and Tonya's murder/100-80 seconds

Scene in the Soviet dugout; Vasya on the telephone/60-50 seconds

Destruction of the German tanks; explosions in the public garden and on the square/60-50 seconds

Soviet troops arrive in the town/50 seconds

Tonya's grave/110-90 seconds

The offensive continues; finale/60-50 seconds

Approximate length of the music: 830-680 seconds

It is assumed that all of these approximate durations will be precisely determined in 5-6 days.

l. 2:

Shot Sequences:

The Russian People Abandon the Town/95.5 seconds

Tikhon Petrovich walks out of the station (forgetting the picture of Gorky)/16 seconds

Tikhon Petrovich walks onto the railway platform/8.5 seconds

Tikhon Petrovich says: "We'll be back"/6.5 seconds
 Pullback from the railway platform (and the train carriage)/8.5 seconds
 Tonya rouses from her fainting spell/4.5 seconds
 Tonya goes to the telephone to call Tikhon Petrovich/15.5 seconds
 Distant shot: the train departs/6.5 seconds
 Tonya telephones Tikhon Petrovich and calls out: "Tikhon Petrovich! Tikhon Petrovich!"/14 seconds
 The telephone rings at the empty duty post/2.5 seconds
 Tonya, frightened to be alone, rises to leave/14 seconds
 96.5 seconds

The Dugout

Vasya asks: "Who's on the telephone?"/3 seconds
 Tonya answers: "The operator on duty"/2.5 seconds
 Vasya exclaims: "Tonya! Could that be you, Tosha?"/4.5 seconds
 The commanders ask in wonder: "Sister, wife?"/2.5 seconds
 Vasya continues talking to Tonya: "You're in the office—how can this be? They told me... they told me you'd left. "/11 seconds
 Tonya (in tears) says: "My Vasik, it's you, and I've been afraid. I thought I was alone. "/13 seconds
 36.5 seconds

The Soviet Artillery

The cannons are raised/16.5 seconds

The Dugout

Vasya falls tensely silent/3.5 seconds
 Tonya says: "The enemy's weapons are situated on the square; they have to be destroyed immediately... do so. "/12 seconds
 Vasya informs the colonel in the dugout: "I have a report that a German battery has been positioned on the square." Colonel: "Neutralize it." Vasya: "Yes sir. "/8.5 seconds
 Vasya says to Tonya: "Lie on the floor, you hear?"/9.5 seconds
 Tonya remains standing in the shadows/2.5 seconds
 Vasya sits down and begins checking coordinates/3.5 seconds
 Chief of staff (to the commander): "I think he should be replaced." The commander answers: "Captain Pavlov, fulfill your duty. "/9 seconds

I. 2ob.:

Vasya checks numbers and takes the telephone receiver/5 seconds
 Weapons are shown being readied for use/7 seconds
 Vasya closes his eyes and orders: "Fire!"/3 seconds
 The weapons are ready to be fired/11.5 seconds
 The weapons fire/2 seconds

Tonya stands. The whistle of a flying mortar and a resounding explosion are heard/2.5 seconds

The window shatters/1 second

An explosion near Tonya; she is thrown back/4.5 seconds

Tonya takes the telephone/4.5 seconds

Vasya waits.../1.5 seconds

The weapons fire/1.5 seconds

Rout of the Germans on the square/6.5 seconds

Tonya says to Vasya: "Good, Vasik, well done... Don't fear, nothing will happen to me... Keep beating them!"/18.5 seconds

After Tonya's death:

Vasya cries out: "Tonya!"/2.5 seconds

Vasya cries out again: "Tonya, Tonya..."/2 seconds

Vasya takes the receiver and, with malice and hatred, orders: "Fire!"/2.5 seconds

The weapons fire/2 seconds

A mortar explodes on the square/2 seconds

A German descends the staircase and jots something down on a pad/4.5 seconds

Vasya twice orders "Fire!"/3.5 seconds

The weapons fire twice/3.5 seconds

Introduction to the song

An officer is blown up/4.5 seconds

An officer is killed/3.5 seconds

Song

A series of explosions on the square/6.5 seconds

In the dugout, Vasya reports: "Task completed."/7.5 seconds

Against the background of the military material an inset title appears about the attack

The attack

Another inset title about the town's occupation

The flag is raised on the flagstaff/12 seconds

l. 3:

Farewell from Katya

Katya lays a hand on Tonya's shoulder/11 seconds

Katya departs/4 seconds

Tonya is left alone/22 seconds

Farewell from Anya

Anya kisses Tonya/15 seconds

Anya departs/6.5 seconds

Tonya is left alone a second time; she weeps/6.5 seconds

This music flows intact into the military music of the inset title/8 seconds

*Important Notes:**1. For the “Russian People” Episode*

The first musical segment should last right up to the beginning of the noise of the departing train carriage, that is, the length of the segment should be 29 seconds.

The second musical segment should flow directly out of the distant signal of the train, seen departing in a distant shot. The second segment lasts 30 seconds (Nos. 8–10).

2. For the “Dugout” Episode

The first musical segment (36 seconds) is required for Vasya and Tonya’s encounter (recognition on the telephone). The encounter begins with Vasya’s question: “Who’s on the telephone?” The music’s basic character should suit that of the plot. Vasya’s heart fills with joy upon contact with Tonya but at the same time he worries about her fate. Joy. Agitation. Worry.

The music for the second episode in the dugout (84 seconds) begins with Tonya’s verbal instruction to detonate the enemy’s weapons. (She speaks firmly, but warmly, quietly.) The music concludes after the shattering of the window in the telephone office. The music’s character: tension before a decisive, critical moment, agitation, stress, empathy with Tonya. The tension develops and culminates with the shattering of the window in Tonya’s room, throwing her back.

The third musical segment (22 seconds) is required for the moment when Tonya, weakened by the incident, goes to the telephone and praises Vasya’s attack in a quiet, faint voice.

3. For the “Song” Episode

The song arises out of the din of our exploding mortars.

A pause follows the song, when the flag is shown.

1. 3 ob.:

4. For the “Tonya’s Grave” Episode

The music begins 2–3 seconds before the long shot for the scene at Tonya’s grave. It might comprise an accented trumpet overture.

A break in the music occurs between the fifth and sixth segments in the narrative.

The actual musical finale begins 6–7 seconds into the fifth segment.

1. 4:

Tonya’s Grave

Long shot: the banner is lowered/15 seconds
 Flowers on the grave/6.5 seconds
 Grave marker with the inscription: "Tonya Pavlova. 19 years old.
 Died heroically at her post."/7 seconds
 The commanders salute/4.5 seconds
 The colonel strides to the grave and affixes a medal to it/9.5
 seconds
 Vasya stands and salutes/5 seconds
 The colonel, having affixed the medal, moves back to the side/13.5
 seconds
 The large grave marker bearing the inscription, with the honor
 guard at rear/2.5 seconds
 The banner is slowly raised/11.5 seconds
 The troops depart. Vasya stands in the foreground/9.5 seconds
 Vasya stays behind alone/3 seconds
 Vasya approaches the grave/13 seconds
 Vasya takes a photograph from his pocket/11 seconds
 The photograph comes to life/4.5 seconds
 Tonya speaks: "Vasik, you're doing swell, keep beating them, beat
 them!"/11 seconds
 Close-up of Tonya at the end/6.5 seconds
 Inset title: "End of the film"/3 seconds
 136.5 seconds

Note:

The finale begins 6–7 seconds into the fifteenth segment.

A break marks the start of the sixth segment.

Notes for the Song:

At the end of page 2 of the itemized segments, the plan for the song is as follows: it begins after a robust introduction to the segment in which Vasya orders "Fire" and mortars explode in sequence on the square. We will name this segment: "Vasya finishes off the enemy."

The song begins soon after the twelfth segment. The song's length is not shown; it will last as long as needed for the segment.

A "break" occurs in the sixteenth segment during the flag raising.

Notes for "Tonya's Grave":

The music for Tonya's grave begins immediately after the flag is raised.

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Notes

ABBREVIATIONS

AVP RF	Archive of External Politics of the Russian Federation (Arkhiv Vneshney Politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii)
GARF	State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Rossiyskoy Federatsii)
LPA	London Prokofiev Archive
MB	Malcolm Brown
RGAE	Russian State Archive of Economics (Rossiyskiy Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Ekonomiki)
RGALI	Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (Rossiyskiy Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Literaturi i Iskusstva)
RGASPI	Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (Rossiyskiy Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Sotsial'no-Politicheskoy Istarii)
RNB	Russian National Library (Rossiyskaya Natsional'naya Biblioteka)
TsGALI SPb	Central State Archive of Literature and Art of St. Petersburg (Tsentral'niy Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Literaturi i Iskusstva Sankt-Peterburga)

INTRODUCTION

1. V[adim] Gayevskiy, *Dom Petipa* (Moscow: Artist. Rezhissyor. Teatr, 2000), 265; N[ina] Berberova, *Kursiv moy: Avtobiografiya* (Moscow: Soglasiye, 1996), 407. Berberova claims that, during his time in America, Prokofiev often said: “‘There’s no place for me here, while Rachmaninoff is still alive, and he will perhaps live for another ten or fifteen years. Europe is inadequate for me; moreover I don’t wish to be in America.’”
2. Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music: From Kamarinskaya to Babi Yar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 318.
3. Gayevskiy, *Dom Petipa*, 265.
4. Alfred Schnittke, “On Prokofiev,” in *A Schnittke Reader*, ed. Alexander Ivashkin; trans. John Goodliffe (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 62–63.

5. Sergey Prokof'ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, ed. Svyatoslav Prokof'ev, 2 vols. (Paris: sprkv, 2002). Part of the 1927 diary has been published in English. See Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Oleg Prokofiev (Boston: Northeastern University Press 1991), 3–157.
6. Prokof'ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:275 (July 30, 1924, entry).
7. *Ibid.*, 2:377.
8. David Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891–1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
9. “Postanovleniye Politbyuro TsK RKP(b) o vozmozhnosti priyezda v SSSR S. S. Prokof'yeva i I. F. Stravinskogo. 21 iyulya 1925 g.,” in *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)–VKP(b), VChK–OGPU–NKVD, o kul'turnoy politike. 1917–1953 gg.*, comp. and introd. Andrey Artizov and Oleg Naumov; ed. A. N. Yakovlev (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniy fond “Demokratiya,” 2002), 58.
10. RGASPI f. 142, op. 1, d. 460, ll. 8–9. The letter dates from February 1925.
11. RGALI f. 2009, op. 2, yed. khr. 4. Lunacharsky forwarded his August 3, 1925, instruction to Boleslav Yavorsky (1878–1942), who forwarded it in turn to Bryusova, his disciple. Novitsky (1888–1971) was a theater scholar by training; Yavorsky and Bryusova were music theorists.
12. Prokof'ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:339 (July 12, 1925).
13. *Ibid.*, 2:347.
14. In places the choreography was “expressive and forceful,” Prokofiev recalled in his diary, “but in other places it was disagreeable and disrespectful of the music: forte and piano counterpoint in the ballet, but in four or eight [counts], while I avoid square-ness. I essentially see the first act for the first time. The orchestra didn't play badly, but without particular force. The climatic buildup toward the end—devised by Massine, Yakulov, and me—was a success. I go out to bow, unhurriedly (would there be political heckling? There wasn't).” *Ibid.*, 2:566.
15. W. M., “Factory Life Ballet: Music and Machinery,” *Daily Mail*, July 6, 1927, p. 9.
16. Prokof'ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:49 (October 30, 1919).
17. “Before going out to play my [Third Piano Concerto of 1921] I begin to get stage-fright. I work at it a bit and manage to calm down. Just the same I cannot take too light a view of the situation: I am in Moscow, where they've been looking forward so intensely to seeing me, and—worst of all—where they know my concerto so intimately I dare not play it badly.” Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 29.
18. *Ibid.*, 79.
19. *Ibid.*, 93.
20. Communist International.
21. From 1935 to 1937, Arens would serve as the Soviet Counsel General in New York, after which he was recalled to Moscow, arrested, charged with espionage and involvement in counterrevolutionary activities, and executed.
22. Prokof'ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:714 (June 22, 1929).
23. Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 153 (March 22).
24. N[ataliya] P. Savkina, “Nekotoriye materialy o zarubezhnom periode zhizni S. S. Prokof'yeva,” in *Russkiye muzikal'niye arkhivy za rubezhom/Zarubezhniye muzikal'niye arkhivy v Rossii*, ed. I. V. Brezhneva and G. M. Malinina (Moscow: Moskovskaya gosudarstvennaya konservatoriya, 2000), 52. For further details, including quotations from Prokofiev's letters to his relatives, see Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 233–34, 251–52, and 301.

25. Savkina, “Nekotoriye material’i o zarubezhnom periode zhizni S. S. Prokof’yeva,” 52.
26. *Ibid.*, 53.
27. Information from Robert Le Cabec, of the Préfecture de Police in Paris, as related to MB on November 7, 1969. Le Cabec supplied the details of Prokofiev’s and his wife’s residences in France, their French *certificats d’identité*, and their Soviet passports.
28. Yelena Pol’dyayeva, “Prokof’yev i russkaya emigratsiya v Parizhe 20–x godov,” in *Sergey Prokof’yev: Pis’ma, vospominaniya, stat’i*, ed. M. P. Rakhmanova (Moscow: Gosudarstvenniiy tsentral’nyi muzey muzikal’noy kul’turi im. M. I. Glinki, 2007), 263.
29. Letter from Nikolay Myaskovsky to Prokofiev dated May 30, 1928, in S. S. *Prokof’yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: Perepiska*, ed. D. B. Kabalevskiy (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Sovetskiy kompozitor,” 1977), 279.
30. Amy Nelson, “The Struggle for Proletarian Music: RAPM and the Cultural Revolution,” *Slavic Review* 59:1 (Spring 2000): 129.
31. Yu. Keldish, “Balet ‘Stal’noy skok’ i yego avtor—Prokof’yev,” *Proletarskiy muzikant* 6 (1929): 12–19.
32. D. Gachev, “O ‘Stal’nom skoke’ i direktorskom naskoke,” 1929, excerpted in *Sergey Prokof’yev 1891–1991: Dnevnik, pis’ma, besedi, vospominaniya*, ed. M. E. Tarakanov (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Sovetskiy kompozitor,” 1991), 200.
33. *Ibid.*, 201.
34. The opera, which concerns demonic possession and religious persecution, was not staged in Prokofiev’s lifetime. He found the work difficult to compose. In the midst of a 1926 overhaul of the ostinato-driven score, he confessed: “With Christian Science I have become entirely detached from this storyline, and hysteria and devilry no longer attract me” (*Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:425). Two months afterward, he reached a creative impasse, half-seriously joking that he either had to abandon his religion or abandon the opera that had subverted it: “Conclusion? Toss *The Fiery Angel* into the stove” (*ibid.*, 2:439). Placing hopes for a 1927 production on Bruno Walter, the director of the Berlin Städtische Oper, he turned warily back to the now sacrilegious score, but the task of reshaping the scenario, having the text translated, and orchestrating the music extended past the contractual deadline. Walter, under pressure to reduce the foreign content of his repertoire, used the delay as a pretext to cancel the staging, and then accused Prokofiev of failing to support him in his battle against dilettante nationalism. Upon hearing about the cancellation from his agent, Prokofiev “became distressed, even bitter, but Christian Science soon calmed me down and dispelled my ire” (*ibid.*, 2:596). His suspicion that *The Fiery Angel* was somehow cursed increased in 1930, when Giulio Gatti-Casazza, the director of the Metropolitan Opera, changed his mind about producing it (*ibid.*, 2:764).
35. *Ibid.*, 2:731 (November 11) and 733 (November 14).
36. *Ibid.*, 2:736.
37. On the origins of the Union of Soviet Composers, see Kiril Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), 13–26.
38. S. S. *Prokof’yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: Perepiska*, 393; also quoted in Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 303.
39. Prokof’yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:829.
40. Stephen D. Press, *Prokofiev’s Ballets for Diaghilev* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2006), 71, 206, and 229–30.
41. Prokof’yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:817.
42. Aleksandr Afinogenov, “Yevropa nashikh dnei,” RGALI f. 2172, op. 1, yed. khr. 114.

43. One such Proletkult figure was Aleksandr Tarasov-Rodionov (1885–1938), a dilettantish Soviet writer known primarily for *Chocolate* (*Shokolad*, 1922), a parable of ideological purification. Following service in the Revolution and civil war, Tarasov-Rodionov became a strident member of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers. The Parisian newspaper *Vozrozhdeniye* and Berlin newspaper *Nash vek* place him in Berlin in early December 1931, where he arranged an interview with Vladimir Nabokov. The interview turned into a courtship, with Tarasov-Rodionov extolling the virtues of Soviet life. Nabokov rebuffed the overture, but he claimed that Tarasov-Rodionov had success courting Prokofiev. See Brian Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 375; and Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), 97–98. However, there exists no primary source evidence of contact between Tarasov-Rodionov and Prokofiev in Berlin or anywhere else, with the remotely possible exception of a note to the composer from June 13, 1929, in the hand of “A. Tarasoff”: it concerns the viewing of an apartment in Paris (LPA binder 21, p. 41). It is extremely unlikely that Stalinist officials would have dispatched such a minor figure to broker Prokofiev’s return. The task fell to others.
44. This and the following quotations in the paragraph from Prokof’yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:803.
45. Ibid., 2:810 (July 5, 1932).
46. RGALI f. 2172, op. 1, yed. khr. 114, l. 65.
47. Information in this paragraph from “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” comp. and introd. Nelly Kravetz, in *Prokofiev and His World*, ed. Simon Morrison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 190–91.
48. Levon Atovm’yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 1, p. 33. I am grateful to Nelly Kravetz for introducing me to the author’s daughter, Svetlana Merzhanova-Atovmyan (1926–2007), and for allowing me to quote from this document, which she is preparing for Russian-language publication along with other Atovmyan family materials. Those sections concerning Shostakovich have been published under the title “Iz vospominaniy,” *Muzikal’naya akademiya* 4 (1997): 67–77.
49. Atovm’yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 1, p. 33.
50. Prokof’yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:815.
51. Atovm’yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 1, p. 39.
52. LPA binder 34, p. 3.
53. Besides the Bolshoy Theater and Belgoskino, Gusman worked for the official Central Committee newspaper *Pravda* and the film production company Mezhrabpom-Rus, which was funded out of the Comintern budget. From 1934 to 1937 he served as a repertoire programmer for the All-Union Radio Committee and the Committee on Arts Affairs.
54. In 1934, for example, Gusman commissioned a *Collective Farm Suite* (*Kolkhoznaya syuita*), a four-part *Dance Suite* (*Tantseval’naya syuita*), a five-part suite from the score for *Lieutenant Kizhe*, and a seven-part suite from the incidental music for *Egyptian Nights* (*Yegipetskiye nochi*)—all on behalf of the Radio Committee. The first of the potential opera subjects he brought to Prokofiev’s attention was *A Story of a Simple Thing* (*Rasskaz o prostoy veshchi*, 1924) by Boris Lavrenyov (real surname Sergeyev, 1891–1959), a civil war adventure about a much-feared Bolshevik who conspires to liberate a town of counterrevolutionaries. In a May 30, 1933, diary entry, Prokofiev recalls Gusman reading the outline of a libretto to him: “[It] is not a bad start (conflict between obligation to the Party and consideration for another person), but there are too few elements. More needs to be brought in about social life and surrounding events. We

- sit and improvise for two hours; it comes out better—an operatic subject could be made of it” (*Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:836). Prokofiev did not actually compose the opera, but he considered doing so more than once.
55. I. Rummel', a member of the film crew, recalls meeting with Prokofiev at his Leningrad hotel to convince him of the merits of the project, claiming that the composer at first refused to take part in it, since “his time was booked long in advance and he had never written for film.” Rummel' claims that he needed “to ‘seduce’ Sergey Sergeyevich with details of the scenario and persuaded him to read the text. In a day or two he agreed to meet with the filmmakers—the scenario interested him.” “Iz istorii ‘Poruchika Kizhe,’” *Sovetskaya muzika* 11 (1964): 69.
 56. Prokof'yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:816–17.
 57. Before writing the novella, which is titled *Second Lieutenant Kizhe* (*Podporuchik Kizhe*), Tynyanov wrote a silent film script on the subject for the director Sergey Yutkevich (1904–85). This film was not made.
 58. Yury Tynyanov [Tynyanov], *Lieutenant Kijé/Young Vitushishnikov*, trans. and intro. Mirra Ginsburg (Boston: Eridanos Press, 1990), xxi.
 59. See M. B. Yampol'skiy, “‘Poruchik Kizhe’ kak teoreticheskii fil'm,” in *Tynyanovskii sbornik: Vtorīye Tynyanovskīye chteniya* (Riga: Zinatne, 1986), 28–43.
 60. Prokof'yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:826.
 61. The song is titled “The Little Gray Dove Sighs” (Stonet sizīy golubochek).
 62. Prokof'yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:835 (May 27, 1933).
 63. The three parcels in question are dated July 13, August 22, and September 13, 1933. In the cover letters, Prokofiev describes the structure and scoring of the now-lost score in minute detail. His outline of the music for the opening shot sequence is typical: “The drumming at the beginning comprises three parts. Part 1—32 seconds of drumming, *pianissimo*. Part 2—40 seconds, flutes with drums, then military music in the distance, then flutes and drums again. Part 3—16 seconds, drums alone. They start a little louder and decline to nothing. 88 seconds in all. If it needs to be lengthened or shortened, this can be done in two places, the first before number [2], where one and the same figure repeats over a span of four measures. It can be repeated twice instead of four times, or from 5–8 times. The second place is in part 3, number [5]; here too a few measures can be lengthened or shortened. The tempo is [quarter note] = 120; in other words each measure lasts 2 seconds, thus it won't be hard for you to calculate an extension or abbreviation. Drums of the Pavel-era type, old and new, must be played with wooden sticks. The entrance of the piccolo and flute is marked *piano*; they don't actually play as such, but sound, as it were, from the distance. The brass orchestra, number 3, sounds in particular from the distance.” LPA binder 34, p. 210.
 64. Grigoriy Kozintsev describes one of the changes: “The scenario of ‘Second Lieutenant Kizhe’ included a scene of Pavel I horseback riding. Rumors of the autocrat's departure flew around the city. Shops closed, frightened passers-by dashed behind gates. Locks clicked in doors, windows were curtained. The city deadened. And then the emperor came charging up the empty avenues of St. Petersburg, furiously spurring his horse.
The scene did not have a direct bearing on the plotline. The director calculated the length of footage and, explaining that the scenario was too long, decided to abbreviate the riding shots.” “Tynyanov v kino,” in *Vospominaniya o Yu. Tynyanove: Portreti i vstrechi*, ed. Veniamin Kaverin (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1983), 263.
 65. See “Otchyot predsedatelya kinokomissii Orgbyuro TsK VKP(b) A. I. Stetskogo o rabote kinokomissii. 7 oktyabrya [1933 g.],” in *Kremlyovskii kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenty*, comp. K. M. Anderson, L. V. Maksimenkov, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Rogovaya; intro.

- L. V. Maksimenkov; ed. G. L. Bondareva (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), 218. The film created political tensions within Belgoskino. The scenarist B. Brodyansky accused Tinyanov of loading *Lieutenant Kizhe* with “formalist” artifices (A-va, “‘Skromnitsi’ iz Belgoskino,” *Kino [Moskva]*, February 10, 1934, p. 2).
66. Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 296. This quotation comes from a short autobiography written by Prokofiev in 1941 at the request of the journal *Sovetskaya muzika*.
67. LPA binder 36, p. 222.
68. N. Otten, “Poruchik Kizhe,” *Kino (Moskva)*, January 10, 1934, p. 3. The review is based on a closed showing of the film, which opened to the public on March 7, 1934.
69. A. Petrovich, “‘Poruchik Kizhe’ (Noviy fil’m Belgoskino),” *Izvestiya*, March 11, 1934, p. 4.
70. M. Bleyman and Il. Trauberg, “‘Poruchik Kizhe,’” *Leningradskaya pravda*, March 9, 1934, p. 4. The authors tersely declare that “S. Prokofiev’s piquant and expressive music [for the film] is written with insufficient clarity.”
71. Prokof’ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:826 (April 21, 1933).
72. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 332.
73. Ye. Dolinskaya, “Tema s variatsiyami–puteshestviyami (iz arkhivov Moskovskoy konservatorii),” in *Otechestvennaya muzikal’naya kul’tura XX veka. K itogam i perspektivam. Nauchno-publitsisticheskiy sbornik*, ed. M. E. Tarakanov (Moscow: Moskovskaya gosudarstvennaya konservatoriya im. Chaykovskogo, 1993), 77.
74. See, for example, Vadim Baranov, “Mnogo gor’kogo: Zhizn’ i smert’ velikogo pisatelya na teleuzionnom ekrane,” *Literaturnaya gazeta*, December 10–16, 2003, p. 10.
75. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 32, l. 1; “On Gorky,” in *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, ed. S. Shlifstein; trans. Rose Prokofieva (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n. d.), 102.
76. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 6.
77. “The Path [*sic*] of Soviet Music” (Puti sovetskoy muziki), in *S. Prokofiev: Autobiography, Articles, Reminiscences*, 99–100; Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 320–21.
78. Leo Tolstoy, *What Is Art?* trans. Richard Pevar and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 164. Tolstoy, who was something of a musicophobe, would not have been satisfied with Prokofiev’s “new simplicity”; he polemicized in Rousseau-like fashion for a direct return to folksong.
79. Prokof’ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:828.
80. Atovm’yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 1, p. 60.
81. Prokof’ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:827 (April 23–27, 1933).
82. *Ibid.*, 2:834.

CHAPTER I

1. N. Zhukovskiy, *Na diplomaticheskoy postu* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973), 257–59.
2. Lina Prokofiev, interview with MB, July 18, 1968. In a trifling 1961 memoir, Lina added that “In Paris, we often visited the Potyomkins at the Soviet Embassy, attending dinners and receptions with very interesting people.” Lina Prokof’yeva, “Iz vospominaniy,” in *Sergey Prokof’ev: Stat’i i materialy*, ed. I. V. Nest’yev and G. Ya. Edel’mann (Moscow: Muzika, 1965), 217.
3. Prokofiev’s Soviet passport requests were initially handled by the Commission for Academic Theaters (Komissiya po akademicheskim teatram). Following the dismantling of the Commission in the early 1930s, the applications were handled by the theaters themselves. The Bolshoy Theater requested passports for Prokofiev on September 21 and December 29, 1935, explaining to the Foreign Department of the Moscow Regional Administration

- (Mosoblispolkom) that the composer was scheduled to perform abroad; a similar request was made on June 5, 1935, for a passport for Lina to travel to Paris to “settle affairs.” During the entire period Prokofiev was working on *Romeo and Juliet* for the Bolshoy Theater. See RGALI f. 648, op. 2, yed. khr. 982, ll. 19, 34, and 68.
4. His status caused him problems at European checkpoints. On April 3, 1934, for example, a border official at Strasbourg sent a letter to the Préfecture de Police in Paris reporting that when Prokofiev crossed the border into Germany he presented a Soviet passport issued in Moscow on October 14, 1933, valid for a year, which contained British, Italian, German, and Swiss visas. The official noted the date of Prokofiev’s *certificat d’identité*—December 20, 1933—and the fact that it bore a notice indicating its invalidation the moment the bearer entered the Soviet Union. The official suggested that because Prokofiev was known in several nations he should perhaps be investigated by the French authorities. (Information from Robert Le Cabec, of the Préfecture de Police, as related to MB on November 7, 1969.)
 5. Gabriel (Gavriil Grigorovich) Paitchadze to MB, unpublished letter of December 24, 1962.
 6. Ibid.
 7. Ibid.
 8. For a description of Prokofiev’s life in Polenovo, see Sviatoslav Prokofiev, “The House in Which *Romeo and Juliet* Was Born,” *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 11 (May 2006): 24–27.
 9. The most thorough discussion of the conception and reception of the ballet is by Deborah Annette Wilson, “Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet*: History of a Compromise” (Ph. D. diss., Ohio State University, 2003). I am grateful to the author for recently sending a copy of her work, which goes into much more specific technical detail about the ballet than what is given here.
 10. The theater would soon be renamed, after Sergey Kirov, Secretary of the Leningrad City and Regional Committees of the Communist Party, who was assassinated on December 1, 1934. The crime was crudely carried out by a disaffected former Party member, Leonid Nikolayev, with suspected covert backing from the Kremlin. Claiming that the crime was part of a Trotskyite scheme to topple his government, Stalin made it pretext for a campaign of political persecution.
 11. Prokofiev’s hopes for a staging of these two operas were misplaced. Myaskovsky essentially ruled out the possibility in a January 24, 1935, letter: “Asafyev came over recently. I inquired about your Leningrad dealings. He’s pessimistic. He believes that, within the ranks of the Leningrad [Composers’] Union (and everywhere it—the Union—can exert influence: the Philharmonic and, principally, the theaters), they are terribly afraid of you and will do everything possible to exclude you. He reckons, moreover, that your projects for the [Mariinsky] Theater are built on sand, and that you are further spoiling things by insisting on a staging of your various earlier works (*Le Pas d’Acier*).” S. S. Prokof’ev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 434; partly quoted in Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891–1935*, 323.
 12. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 44, l. 3.
 13. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 21 (Prokof’ev and M[ira] A[bramovna] Mendel’son, *Notograficheskiy spravochnik proizvedeniy S. Prokof’yeva*, 1951–52), l. 21. There are several different versions of the work list at RGALI. These were typed and annotated by Prokofiev’s second wife on Atovmian’s suggestion. They include Prokofiev’s occasional handwritten remarks.
 14. Noëlle Mann, “Background to *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 8 (November 2004): 25.
 15. Communist Union of Youth.

16. The statement is translated by Edward Morgan in “Prokofiev’s Shakespearian Period,” *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 10 (November 2005): 5.
17. Radlov’s letter requesting the termination of his employment, sent to the Director of the State Theaters, reads: “Since I neither consider it a moral obligation nor a practical benefit to work in the atmosphere of overt and shameless persecution that has been created for me within the walls of the Theater of Opera and Ballet, I ask to be released from work in the Theater.” RNB f. 625, yed. khr. 351, l. 1.
18. Mutnikh was a career military officer, heading, before his January 23, 1935, appointment to the Bolshoy Theater, the Central (Cultural) House of the Red Army (Tsentral’niy dom Krasnoy Armii). His commissioning of *Romeo and Juliet*, together with another ballet by Asafyev (*Spartak*) and two operas, was announced at a June 17, 1935, meeting of the Bolshoy Theater repertoire board. RGALI f. 648, op. 1, yed. khr. 995, l. 117.
19. RGALI f. 1929, op. 4.
20. Prokof’ev and V[era] V[ladimirovna] Alpers, “Perepiska,” in *Muzikal’noye nasledstvo: Sborniki po istorii muzikal’noy kul’turi SSSR*, vol. 1, ed. G. B. Bernandt, V. A. Kiselyov, and M. S. Pekelis (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye muzikal’noye izdatel’stvo, 1962), 427. The letter is dated July 8, 1935. The draft score (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 58) contains 56 numbers. Prokofiev indicates when he completed act 2 (July 22), act 3 (August 29), act 4 (September 7), and the introduction (September 8). The published score contains 52 numbers; act 4 was reduced in length from 6 numbers to 2.
21. S. S. Prokof’ev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 440. The letter is dated September 11, 1935.
22. The plot of *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*, an Orientalist ballet based on a Pushkin poem, unfolds in a Crimean kingdom whose despondent ruler cannot appreciate the splendor of his surroundings or his variegated harem. Besides the maudlin orchestration, Prokofiev blanched at Asafyev’s implausible inclusion of a waltz in the harem scene.
23. Atovm’yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 1, p. 60.
24. Mann, “Background to *Romeo and Juliet*,” 26.
25. Yuriy Fayer, *O sebe, o muzike, o baletе* (Moscow: Vsesoyuznoye izdatel’stvo sovetskiiy kompozitor, 1970), 354.
26. Sergey Radlov, “Yunost’ teatra,” *Teatr i dramaturgiya* (June 1935): 23. A variation of this same quotation is included in David Zolotnitsky, *Sergei Radlov: The Shakespearian Fate of a Soviet Director*, trans. Tatania Ganf and Natalia Egunova (New York: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), 115.
27. Like Piotrovsky, Dinamov became a victim of the purges.
28. RGALI f. 1929, op. 4.
29. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 66, ll. 1–2. S[vetlana] A. Petukhova reproduces the scenario largely intact in “Pervaya avtorskaya redaktsiya baleta Prokof’eva ‘Romeo i Dzhul’yetta.’ Istochnikovedcheskiye problemі izucheniya” (Ph. D. diss., MGK. im. P. I. Chaykovskogo, 1997), app. 1, pp. 23–28.
30. Aleksandr Afinogenov, *Izbrannoye*, ed. K. N. Kirilenko and V. P. Koshunova, 2 vols. (Moscow: Iskustvo, 1977), 2:318.
31. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 1 (October 4, 1935, diary entry).
32. RNB f. 625, yed. khr. 465, l. 3.
33. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 932, no. 108 (A. Kut [Aleksandr Kutuzov], “Balet ‘Romeo i Dzhul’yetta’ na soveshchaniі v ‘Sovetskom iskustve,’” *Sovetskoye iskustvo*, January 29, 1936).
34. RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 951, l. 1.

35. The director of the Maliy Theater in Moscow, which is located adjacent to the Bolshoy Theater, was also arrested on April 20, 1937. See *Bol'shaya tsenzura: Pisateli i zhurnalisti v Strane Sovetov. 1917–1956*, comp. L. V. Maksimenkov; ed. A. N. Yakovlev (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniy fond “Demokratiya,” 2005), 462–63.
36. Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 299. The argument that “living people can dance, the dying cannot” came from Radlov. The director stressed that “in a ballet the most essential, expressive, and content-bearing elements must be embodied in dance and only in dance, and we, the designers of this spectacle, firmly hope that Juliet’s and Romeo’s parts will be ranked among the very best in our ballet repertoire.” “Balet ‘Romeo i Dzhul’yetta,’” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, June 23, 1935, p. 3.
37. “Pis'ma S. S. Prokof'yeva k P. A. Lammu,” in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. Stat'i*, ed. M. P. Rakhmanova (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Deka-VS,” 2004), 283 and 290: “Enclosed is act III of *Romeo* (your score, my original and additional pages with references). I'd be grateful if you filled in the holes [those sections of the piano score for which Prokofiev did not dictate the orchestration], which I stopped up with the exception of the part for the mandolin. Please also do the page with No. 51, that is, the beginning of act IV” (August 6, 1936); “Three numbers remain to be done up: two dances with mandolins (Nos. 46 and 49) and the ending—Juliet's death, No. 52” (July 27, 1938).
38. Petukhova, “Pervaya avtorskaya redaktsiya baleta Prokof'yeva ‘Romeo i Dzhul’yetta.’ Istochnikovedcheskiye problem'i izucheniya,” 89–90.
39. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: First Church of Christ, Scientist, 1994), 256.
40. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 2004), 203.
41. It was intended for the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Prokofiev proposed revising both the libretto of the music of the 1927 version of *The Fiery Angel* in an effort to enliven the visual action. The Metropolitan Opera did not, in the end, contract the revision.
42. In the second of the three draft scenarios preserved at RGALI, the “Dance of the Two Captains” is renamed the “Dance of the Two Pirates.” It was part of a trio of exotic dances associated with Paris's wooing of Juliet. “According to custom,” the scenario reads, “Paris comes with a gift-bearing retinue to rouse his bride on the day of their wedding.” The gifts include Syrian emeralds, Moorish carpets, and “various contraband goods.” RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 66, l. 6.
43. *Music for Children (Detskaya muzika)*. Prokofiev premiered the twelve pieces in 1936 and scored seven of them for youth orchestra in 1941 under the title *Summer Day (Letniy den')*. The collection is a creative riposte to the children's music composed by Schumann and Chaikovsky. See G. Shestakov, “Detskaya muzika,” in *Sergey Sergeyevich Prokof'yev*, ed. O[l'ga] Ochakovskaya (Moscow: Muzika, 1990), 121–23.
44. The collection did not enamor the adjudicators; neither, however, did any of the other 2,186 submissions. The results from the contest were published in *Pravda* on March 29, 1936. One of Prokofiev's songs earned a second prize; another received an honorable mention. The collection comprises two songs for chorus and piano, “Partisan Zheleznyak” and “Anyutka,” and four songs for solo voice and piano or unison chorus and piano: “The Country Is Growing” (Rastyot strana), “Through Snow and Fog” (Skvoz' snega i tuman'), “Beyond the Mountain” (Za goroyu), and “Song of Voroshilov” (Pesnya o Voroshilove). “Anyutka” earned the second prize award, “The Country Is Growing” honorable mention. “Partisan Zheleznyak” was performed at the March 18, 1936, opening of the Moscow Folk Arts Theater, with Prokofiev in attendance. See “Nevidannoye zrelishe,” in *Prokof'yev*

- o *Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yu*, ed. V. P. Varunts (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1991), 137.
45. Lina Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 218–19.
46. "Sumbur vmesto muziki: ob opere 'Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uyezda' D. Shostakovicha," *Pravda*, January 28, 1936, p. 3. Leonid Maksimenkov has determined that the article was almost undoubtedly written by Kerzhentsev. See his *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938* (Moscow: Yuridicheskaya Kniga, 1997), 89–112.
47. "Baletnaya fal'sh'" (Balletic Falseness), *Pravda*, February 6, 1936, p. 3.
48. The fallout from the attacks seemed to ensure that none of the composers who participated in the *Pravda* song contest earned a first-prize award. In a February 20, 1936, letter to Prokofiev, Myaskovsky speculates that the adjudicators "perhaps became scared by the uproar around the articles in *Pravda* about Shostakovich (*Lady and Limpid Stream*)."
S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: Perepiska, 446.
49. Unsigned, "Na sobranii moskovskikh kompozitorov," *Pravda*, February 17, 1936, p. 3.
50. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 655, l. 1.
51. *Ibid.*, l. 10b.
52. *Ibid.*, l. 3.
53. *Ibid.*, l. 2.
54. *Ibid.*
55. This information from a July 25, 1936, letter. See Prokof'yev and Alpers, "Perepiska," 428.
56. After the famous airman Valeriy Chkalov (1904–38), who completed a series of record-breaking flights, including a trip in 1937 from Russia to the United States over the North Pole.
57. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 655, l. 4.
58. *Ibid.*
59. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 21 (*Notograficheskii spravochnik*), l. 22; Yu. Slonimskiy, "Vstrechi s Prokof'yevim," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 130.
60. Atovm'yan relates: "One evening with Derzhanovsky we discussed the article 'Muddle Instead of Music.' Prokofiev asked me to obtain a copy of the piano and orchestral scores of *Lady Macbeth* for him, which I gladly did. In ten days Prokofiev returned them to me and declared: 'I looked closely at it all. The opera's dramaturgy is wonderful: each scene is constructed very successfully. Your friend orchestrated the opera splendidly and inventively. When the opportunity arises please convey my opinion to him.'" "Iz vospominaniy," 74.
61. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 190b.
62. Atovm'yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 1, p. 60. Lina often sang Prokofiev's *The Ugly Duckling* (*Gadkiy utyonok*, 1914) when the two of them performed together.
63. Valentina Chemberdzhii, *V dome muzika zhila: Memuari o muzikantakh* (Moscow: Agraf, 2002), 101.
64. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 208, l. 1 (letter of September 20, 1936, to Ol'ga Vasil'yevna Codina).
65. Catriona Kelly, "At Peace with the Wolf? Prokofiev's 'Official' Soviet Works for Children," *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 12 (November 2006): 6.
66. Natalia Sats, *Sketches from My Life*, trans. Sergei Syrovatkin (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1985), 218. See pp. 210–27 for a fuller description of the origins and creation of *Peter and the Wolf*.
67. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 241, l. 4.
68. Kelly, "At Peace with the Wolf? Prokofiev's 'Official' Soviet Works for Children," 7–8.
69. Linda J. Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1989), 68.

70. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 287, l. 160b.
71. The performance also included “The Chatterbox” (Boltun’ya), the first of Prokofiev’s *Three Songs for Children* (*Tri detskiye pesni*, 1939).
72. On the following, see Nelly Kravetz, “S. Prokofiev and E. Senkar: The First Performance of the *Russian Overture* op. 72 in Israel in 1938,” *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 1 (2006). Available at http://www.biu.ac.il/HU/mu/min-ad/06/Kravitz_final.pdf.
73. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 2 (October 27, 1936, diary entry).
74. Ibid (October 31, 1936). The reason for Prokofiev’s absence is unknown.
75. V[alerian] Bogdanov–Berezovskii, “Kontsert S. Prokof’yeva,” *Krasnaya gazeta*, April 17, 1937, p. 4.
76. Mark Bičurin, the director of the Regional Theater in Brno, approached Prokofiev about staging the ballet on June 15, 1937. The January 19, 1938, contract called for the theater to receive the piano score on April 1, the scenario on June 1, and the orchestral score on July 1, 1938. The production, which Prokofiev did not see, extended from December 30, 1938 to May 5, 1939 (seven performances). It was choreographed by Ivo Váňa-Psota (1908–52), who took the part of Romeo. For details of the production and its sociopolitical context, see Rudolf Pečman, “Licht im Dunkel: Zur Brünner Uraufführung von Prokofjews Ballett *Romeo and Julia*,” in *Bericht über das Internationale Symposion “Sergej Prokofjew—Aspekte seines Werkes und der Biographie.” Köln 1991*, ed. Klaus Wolfgang Niemöller (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag: 1992), 251–68. The correspondence between Bičurin and Prokofiev is housed at RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 852; f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 155; and f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 222.
77. Prokofiev received the commission from the Union of Soviet Composers for the First Suite in 1935 and the Second Suite in 1936 (he completed them both that year). The Third Suite dates from 1946.
78. RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 952, l. 75.
79. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 123, l. 1; “V stengazetu Soyuzu kompozitorov,” in *Prokof’jev o Prokof’jeve: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 139.
80. “Vistupleniye po Bryussel’skomu radio,” in *Prokof’jev o Prokof’jeve: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 146.
81. Letter of December 24, 1936, in *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, ed. and trans. Harlow Robinson (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 320.
82. Edward Barry, “Ovation Given Prokofieff at Concert Here,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 22, 1937, p. 23.
83. Ibid.
84. L. A. B. et al., “What’s Going On in the Arts,” *Christian Science Monitor*, February 6, 1937, p. 10.
85. Vernon Duke, *Passport to Paris* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), 344–45.
86. In a June 19, 1937, letter from Moscow to New York, Prokofiev informs Duke: “The automobile has arrived, and—with a good chauffeur—makes life much easier, especially when spring comes and one has the opportunity to go out *ins grüne*” (*Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 156). A RGALI record suggests that Prokofiev did not receive his own Moscow driver’s license until July 16, 1938.
87. Jessie Ash Arndt, “Soviet Envoy Entertains at Musicale in Embassy,” *Washington Post*, February 9, 1937, p. 12.
88. The following discussion of the Cantata uses text from Simon Morrison and Kravetz, “The *Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October*, or How the Specter of Communism Haunted Prokofiev,” *Journal of Musicology* 23:2 (May 2006): 227–62. This essay offers a much more comprehensive discussion of the libretto and music of the work than given here.
89. Lina Prokof’yeva, “Iz vospominaniy,” 214.

90. RGALI f. 2172, op. 1, yed. khr. 191, l. 1 (letter of September 10, 1932).
91. Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture (Gosudarstvennii Tsentral'nyi Muzei Muzikal'noy Kul'turi im. M. I. Glinki), f. 33, yed. khr. 1299.
92. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, ll. 2–3.
93. Izrail' Nest'yev, "O Leninskoy kantate (Iz istorii muzikal'noy leniniani)," *Sovetskaya muzika* 4 (1970): 96. The letter dates from January 26, 1970.
94. Pierre Souvtchinsky to MB, letter of March 6, 1975.
95. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 245, l. 2. Page 4 of this file includes, recto, a portion of the Cantata libretto and, verso, Afinogenov's text for "Gennadiy's Song" (Pesnya Gennadiya), which Prokofiev renamed "The Country Is Growing" for use in his 1935 collection of mass songs.
96. Ibid., l. 1.
97. Ibid., l. 1–10b.
98. These words do not appear in the actual score of the Cantata.
99. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 245, ll. 10–13.
100. *Stenogramma soveshchaniya kompozitorov i khoduzhestvennikh rukovoditeley muz. teatrov o podgotovke muz. proiz. k 20 letiyu Oktyabr'skoy Revolyutsii*; RGALI f. 962, op. 3, yed. khr. 270, l. 9.
101. *Plani, programmi kontsertov v svyazi s podgotovkoy k 20-letiyu Oktyabr'skoy Revolyutsii*; RGALI f. 962, op. 5, yed. khr. 74, ll. 22–23.
102. See L. Danilevich, "Porazheniye kompozitora," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, October 5, 1937, p. 4. I am grateful to Marina Frolova-Walker for this reference.
103. "Puteviye zametki muzikanta," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yev: Stat'i, interv'yuy*, 132.
104. "Moi plani," in *ibid.*, 142.
105. Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 232–35.
106. Quoted in *ibid.*, 234.
107. P[laton] Kerzhentsev, *Zhizn' Lenina 1870–1924* (Moscow: Partizdat TsK VKPb, 1937).
108. Quoted in Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 235. Molotov's remark, written across the front of Kerzhentsev's letter to Tukhachevsky, is dated May 17, 1936 (RGALI f. 962, op. 10, yed. khr. 9, l. 4).
109. Marina Nest'yeva, *Sergey Prokof'yev* (Chelyabinsk: Arkaim, 2003), 146–47.
110. Quotations in this and the next paragraph from RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 413, ll. 1–2.
111. Demchinsky quotes a famous slogan from a speech Stalin gave on November 17, 1935, to the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites.
112. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 182, l. 1.
113. Ibid.
114. The passage in question was sketched by Prokofiev in 1930, long before the commissioning of the Cantata. See RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 285, l. 24.
115. Aleksandr Vasil'yevich Gauk, *Memuari. Izbranniye stat'i. Vospominaniya sovremennikov* (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1975), 94.
116. Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 235.
117. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 190b. In his diary, which is preserved in fragments in the Prokofiev holdings at RGALI, Myaskovsky claims that he heard the Cantata a day earlier, on June 18, and found it "a little naive (harmonically)" (RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 2). In another, published excerpt from the diary, he writes: "Prokofiev showed the Cantata for the Twentieth Anniversary of October....—terrific" (O[l]ga

- P[avlovna] Lamm, *Stranitsi tvorcheskoy biografii Myaskovskogo* [Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1989], 259).
118. "Redaktsionniye besedi: 'Nedelya sovetskoy muziki,'" *Sovetskaya muzika* 1 (1968): 21.
 119. Prokof'yev and Alpers, "Perepiska," 430.
 120. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 33.
 121. "Shlyu Vam staro-druzheskiy privet," comp. and ed. Galina Kopitova, *Sovetskaya muzika* 4 (1991): 99–100.
 122. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 327, l. 5 (Western Union telegram).
 123. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 33. The piano score of the Cantata is dated June 5, 1937, and the orchestral score September 21.
 124. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 327, l. 6 (Western Union telegram).
 125. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 41.
 126. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, ll. 2–3 (December 15, 1937, and November 29, 1938, entries).
 127. "Rastsvet iskusstva," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevye: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 157.
 128. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 107, ll. 1–2.
 129. "Yest' chelovek za stenami Kremlya, / Znayet i lyubit yego vsya zemlya / Radost' i schast'ye tvoyo ot nego / Stalin! Velikoye imya yego!"
 130. "O Staline mudrom, rodnom i lyubimom, / Prekrasnuyu pesnyu slagayet narod"; "Mi Rodine sluzhim v porive yedinom / Zatem, shtob mechta vekovaya sbilas'."
 131. In two brief reviews, praise was accorded the fifth number in the suite, "Brother for Brother" (Brat za brata), a ballad to words by Lebedev-Kumach about the death of a soldier and the pledge of his two brothers to replace him in defense of the nation. See RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 943, no. 128 (A. Gal'skiy, "Pesni nashey rodini," *Krasnaya gazeta*, November 20, 1938) and no. 129 (V. Vladimirov, "Pesni o rodine," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, November 20, 1938).
 132. Unsigned, "Dekada sovetskoy muziki," *Pravda*, November 30, 1938, p. 6; and unsigned, "Zaklyuchitel'niy kontsert dekad'i sovetskoy muziki," *Pravda*, December 1, 1938, p. 6.
 133. These events are related in the memoirs of her daughter, the actress Roksana Sats, in *Put' k sebe: O mame Natalii Sats, lyubvi, iskaniiakh, teatre: Povest'* (Moscow: Voskresen'ye, 1998).
 134. Lina Prokofiev, interview with MB, December 20, 1982.
 135. Valentina Chamberdzhii, *XX vek Lini Prokof'yevoy* (Moscow: Izdatel'skiy dom "Klassika XXI," 2008), 186. This book, a biography of Lina, includes select quotations from interviews and private letters kept at the Prokofiev family archive in Paris. The poorly edited narrative is biased against Prokofiev's second wife, Mira Mendelson, and it contains various factual errors—for example, that Prokofiev's Pushkin romances were premiered on "experimental television" in 1937, a technological impossibility (p. 184). The author, the daughter of the composer Nikolay Chamberdzhii (1903–48), befriended Lina after 1956 but remembers Mira from 1944.
 136. Lina learned the news in London. "We received a letter from the children," she wrote to her mother on January 29, 1938. "It seems that the English school was closed down unexpectedly—it is most annoying and I feel rather upset about it. Now they will have to go to a Russian one" (unpublished postcard; photocopy in the possession of MB).
 137. Quoted in Ekaterina Chernysheva, "Sergei Prokofiev—'Soviet' Composer," *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 4 (November 2002): 11–12. The letter is dated December 23, 1937. One sentence is excluded from Chernysheva's quotation: "Besides this, Heifetz is playing my Second Violin Concerto everywhere, Toscanini is conducting my *Russian* Overture, and the New York League of Composers,

- the University of Chicago, and the Prokofiev Society of the University of New Hampshire have expressed a desire to greet me" (*Prokof'yeu o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 158 n. 6).
138. Of biggest concern was a long-planned performance on February 15 at the Chicago Renaissance Society. Judith Cass, "Friends Await Russian News of Prokofieff," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 5, 1938, p. 15.
139. AVP RF f. 162, op. 13, papka 68, d. 28, l. 25.
140. Maysky to Voroshilov, letter of February 3, 1938, in *Ivan Mikhaylovich Mayskiy: Izbrannaya perepiska s rossiyskimi korrespondentami*, ed. V. S. Myasnikov et al., 2 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), 2:68. The actual contract for the "Song of Voroshilov" is dated April 17, 1938. It specifies a work for chorus and orchestra of no longer than eight minutes, to be submitted to the Committee on Arts Affairs by April 28. Prokofiev received a hefty 3,000 rubles for the task (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, l. 26).
141. AVP RF f. 162, op. 13, papka 68, d. 28, l. 56.
142. "Musical at Soviet Embassy," *Evening Star*, March 22, 1938, p. B4. Hope Ridings Miller sets the number at 300 ("Trojanovskys Present Two Soviet Musicians," *Washington Post*, March 22, 1938, p. X12).
143. "Her voice, although rich and mellow in quality, lacked in proper production." Vernon Duke to MB, unpublished letter of September 5, 1962.
144. Prokofiev drafted the March 21 Washington program in Hollywood, sending it a week in advance to the Soviet Embassy for review.
145. Miller, "Trojanovskys Present Two Soviet Musicians."
146. Warren Storey Smith, "Prokofieff Dominates Symphony," *Boston Post*, March 26, 1938, p. 8.
147. Unsigned, "Young Russia," *Time*, April 4, 1938, p. 46.
148. AVP RF f. 192, op. 5, papka 44, d. 59, l. 19. The press kit was compiled by the Haensel & Jones firm in New York.
149. Unsigned, "Prokofieff Hails Life of Artist in Soviet; With 4 Incomes, He Is Here for Concerts," *New York Times*, February 6, 1938, p. 43.
150. Arlynn Nellhaus, "Jean Cranmer Hosted Earliest DSO Artists," *Denver Post*, Roundup Section, February 26, 1978, p. 16.
151. Frances Wayne, "Prokofiev, at Piano, Moves Too Fast for Symphony Musicians," *Denver Post*, February 19, 1938, p. 7. Another review, by Anne Stein Roth, was much more generous: "Prokofieff's Work Pleases," *Rocky Mountain News*, February 19, 1938, p. 5.
152. Nellhaus, "Jean Cranmer Hosted Earliest DSO Artists," p. 16. Another critic recalled "Prokofieff's bad manners out-wolfing the wolf in *Peter and the Wolf*" (Childe Herald, "Ideas and Comment," *Rocky Mountain Herald*, December 26, 1953, p. 1).
153. Unpublished letter of March 30, 1938; photocopy in the possession of MB. The phrase "false pride" comes from Christian Science.
154. Serge Koussevitzky Archive, Music Division, box 50, folder 20, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
155. Unpublished letter; photocopy in the possession of MB.
156. Elizabeth Bergman, "Prokofiev on the LA Limited," in *Sergey Prokofiev and His World*, 442.
157. Lina Prokof'eva, "Iz vospominaniy," 221.
158. She and Prokofiev also attended a tea at the home of the actor Edward G. Robinson and his wife on March 15.
159. Information from Russell Merritt ("Recharging *Alexander Nevsky*: Tracking the Eisenstein-Prokofiev War Horse," *Film Quarterly* 48:2 [Winter 1994]: 46–47 n. 11), as

corrected by Dave Smith, director of the Walt Disney Archives, in a November 29, 2005, personal communication.

160. Letter of March 7, 1938, in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Stat'i i materiali*, 222–23.
161. Letter of March 2, 1938, in S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 456–57.
162. *Ibid.*, 458.
163. Paitchadze to MB, unpublished letter of December 24, 1962.
164. In the aforementioned letter from Polk to Koussevitzky, Polk notes that, in 1939, he “succeeding in rekindling [Disney’s] interest in the matter and received an offer from him of \$1,500.00 for the use of *Peter and the Wolf*. I might add that compared to other prices paid for *Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, etc., this offer was not unreasonable.”
165. Duke, *Passport to Paris*, 367. In the 1968 Russian-language edition of this memoir, the final lines are adjusted: “‘You know, Dima, it just occurred to me that I won’t soon return to your parts...Don’t you think it would be good for you to come to Russia?’ ‘No, I don’t think so,’ [I responded], smiling bravely in order to mask a strange feeling of foreboding.” Dukel’skiy, *Ob odnoy prevannoy družbe*, 1968, quoted in Igor’ Vishnevetskiy, “Pamyatka vozvrashchayushchimsya v SSSR, ili o chyom govorili Prokof'yev i Dukel'skiy vesnoy 1937 i zimoy 1938 v N'yu-Yorke,” in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. Stat'i*, 391.
166. Berthe Malko, “Prokof'yev,” unpublished 1982 typescript in the possession of MB.
167. “The two—Sergei and Lina—argued and fought continually, these arguments and fights usually ending in a flood of tears on L. I.’s part, with me in the middle.” Duke to MB, unpublished letter of September 5, 1962.
168. A document filed with the Préfecture de Police in Paris on May 3, 1938, indicates that Lina resided at the Hotel Astor between April 6 and May 7 (information from Le Cabec, as related to MB, November 19, 1969).

CHAPTER 2

1. *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 158; translation slightly adjusted.
2. Duke, *Passport to Paris*, 436.
3. Prokof'yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:756.
4. *Ibid.*, 2:755–57.
5. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 332, l.44.
6. Unpublished letter; photocopy in the possession of MB. The lesson cited is from Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.
7. Unsigned, “800 kopiý fil'ma ‘Aleksandr Nevskiy,’” *Izvestiya*, November 29, 1938, p. 4.
8. Zdeněk Stríbrný, *Shakespeare and Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 84. The author does not identify the critic.
9. Radlov, “Nasha rabota nad ‘Gamletom,’” *Krasnaya gazeta*, May 9, 1938, p. 3.
10. Eleanor Rowe, *Hamlet: A Window on Russia* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 128.
11. Quoted in Morgan, “Prokofiev’s Shakespearean Period,” 8.
12. “I enclose the five songs for *Hamlet* that I orchestrated on the ship,” he wrote on February 2. “Please get them into shape and send them to Radlov’s theater in Leningrad.” And on February 4: “I’m sending you the final march for Radlov’s theater. The orchestration of the songs has to reach him quickly, the march less so.” “Pis'ma S. S. Prokof'yeva k P. A. Lammu,” 288–89.
13. This and the following quotations in the paragraph come from “O muzike k ‘Gamletu’ V. Shekspira,” in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yev: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 158. For an English-language

- translation of Prokofiev's program notes, see "On the Music for Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," in *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews*, ed. Vladimir Blok (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 33–34.
14. In a letter dated December 21, 1937, Prokofiev told Radlov: "I am sending you the songs of Ophelia and the gravedigger. I hope that they won't be difficult [to perform]. In the Ophelia songs (excluding the first) I used folk material. In the second [Ophelia] shouldn't dance during the postlude, but during the song; the postlude should be mimed. I have provided metronomic indications for the tempos: see that they are maintained" (quoted in *Prokof'yeu o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yū*, 159 n. 1). In his work list, Prokofiev reports that "part of the music of Ophelia's songs came from an English songbook (the name of the songbook is lost)." RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 36.
 15. "O muzike k 'Gamletu' V. Shekspira," 159.
 16. Radlov could not depict Hamlet as a tragic hero. As Rowe argues, "To the extent that mystery and enigma play a part in any great and tragic representation of life, a Soviet tragic hero may be deemed, on purely ideological grounds, a contradiction in terms" (*Hamlet: A Window on Russia*, 127).
 17. Quoted in Morgan, "Prokofiev's Shakespearean Period," 8.
 18. Leonid Pinsky observes in this context: "For the Soviet researcher or director, viewer or reader, it was obvious, as a rule, that the tragic collisions in Shakespeare are 'the current age' of the bourgeois society colliding with the 'past century' of knighthood." "The Tragic in Shakespeare's Works," in *Russian Essays on Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Alexander Parfenov and Joseph G. Price (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998), 40.
 19. S. Tsimbal wrote, for example: "An enormous role in the drama's success belonged to the composer S. Prokofiev and the artist V. Dmitriyev. Both of them took active parts in the organization of the scenic action, and both of them can be regarded in a broad sense of the term as the co-authors of the spectacle. Prokofiev's theatrical, energetic, and satiating music became an integral part of the scenic action. [He] provided a true example of how one ought to write music for a dramatic spectacle, without appending distracting musical excerpts onto it." RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 943, no. 15 ("Muzhestvo Gamleta," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, June 4, 1938).
 20. I. Berezark, "*Gamlet*" v *Teatre imeni Leningradskogo Soveta. Opit analiza spektaklya* (Leningrad: L[eningradskoye] O[tdeleniye] V[serossiyskogo] T[eatral'nogo] O[bshchestva]), 56–57 and 75–76.
 21. David Shearer, "Elements Near and Alien: Passportization, Policing, and Identity in the Stalinist State, 1932–1952," *Journal of Modern History* 76 (December 2004): 847.
 22. Letter of May 14, 1938; RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 655, l. 16.
 23. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).
 24. Abram Tertz, "On Socialist Realism," in *The Trial Begins and On Socialist Realism*, trans. George Dennis; introd. Czeslaw Milosz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 215.
 25. Gitta Hammerburg, *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin's Sentimentalist Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7–8. Sentimentalism informed Socialist Realism.
 26. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 41.
 27. L[yudmila] Skorino, *Pisatel' i yego vremya: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo V. P. Katayeva* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1965), 300.

28. P. A. Borozdina, A. N. *Tolstoy i teatr* (Voronezh: Izdatel'stvo voronezhskogo universiteta, 1974), 166–73. The play is titled *Path to Victory* (*Put' k pobede*).
29. Prokof'ev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 2:520.
30. Tolstoy edited the libretto of Bedřich Smetana's 1866 opera *The Bartered Bride* (*Prodana nevěsta*) for Soviet consumption. Borozdina, A. N. *Tolstoy i teatr*, 165–66.
31. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 150, l. 14 (letter of December 15, 1938).
32. Morgan, "A Soldier Came from the Front: New Light on the Literary Sources of Prokofiev's First 'Soviet' Opera *Semyon Kotko*," *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 6 (November 2003): 8. For details on Prokofiev and Katayev's literary collaboration, see pp. 9–11.
33. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 30, l. 1. The quotation comes from the typescript of an interview published in *Vechernyaya Moskva* on December 6, 1932. It merits noting that, besides Prokofiev, Makarov-Rakitin based an opera on the novella, but it does not seem to have been staged. It was adjudicated by the Committee on Arts Affairs on June 22, 1940, just one day before the premiere of Prokofiev's opera.
34. Skorino, *Pisatel' i yego vremya: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo V. P. Katayeva*, 290.
35. *Ibid.*, 291.
36. Valentin Katayev, *Ya, sin trudovogo naroda* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1938), 18.
37. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 37.
38. These and the following quotations in the paragraph from Prokofiev, "Semyon Kotko," in *Materials, Articles, Interviews*, 36–38.
39. Here he mentions the "letter" scene in Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.
40. The latter occurs in the act 3 "mad" scene, and involves the end-to-end repetition of phrases in the keys of G minor and C-sharp minor. The tritone-partitioning signifies the breakdown of rational thought.
41. Zinaida Raykh (1894–1939), Meyerhold's wife and lead actress, drafted a petition on her husband's behalf about the closing of the theater to Stalin; Meyerhold, however, advised her against mailing it. See T. S. Esenina, *O V. E. Meyerkhof'de i Z. N. Raykh: Pis'ma K. L. Rudnitskomu* (Moscow: Novoye izdatel'stvo, 2003), 228.
42. *Ibid.*, 226.
43. Skorino, *Pisatel' i yego vremya: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo V. P. Katayeva*, 306.
44. Caryl Emerson, "Surviving in the Belly of the Beast: Four Paradoxes about Great Music under Stalin," unpublished paper given at the symposium "Music and Dictatorship: Russia Under Stalin," Carnegie Hall, New York City, February 22, 2003.
45. Kerzhentsev lost his post to Nazarov on January 19, 1938, just days after the liquidation of Meyerhold's Theater. Khrapchenko became the acting chairman of the Committee on April 1, 1938, and chairman on January 4, 1939. He held the position until 1948.
46. Irina Medvedeva, "'Chornoye leto' 1939 goda," in *Sergey Prokof'ev: Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. Stat'i*, 320.
47. *Ibid.*, 321.
48. A. Fevral'skiy, "Prokof'ev i Meyerkhof'd," in *Sergey Prokof'ev: Stat'i i material'i*, 116.
49. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 3 (April 12, 1939, entry).
50. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 283. Although Myaskovsky was a member of the Stalin Prize Committee, his nomination of Prokofiev was rebuffed. Khrapchenko remained unconvinced of Prokofiev's commitment to "the service of the people." At a December 30, 1940, meeting of the Committee, Khrapchenko declared: "I'm not planning to pass judgment on Prokofiev's

talent, but it seems to me that the Stalin Prize is granted not just for talent, but for talent placed in the service of the people, talent used in such a way that the people feel joy, strength, more powerful....If from this point of view one approaches Prokofiev's creativity, then it seems to me that his works do not merit a Stalin Prize, in spite of his talent." *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel' Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: april' 1939-yanvar' 1948*, comp., ed., and introd. V. V. Perkhin (Moscow: Nauka, 2007), 582–53 n. 11.

51. On the composer's text-setting technique, see Richard Taruskin, "Tone, Style, and Form in Prokofiev's Soviet Operas: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Studies in the History of Music, Vol. 2: Music and Drama* (New York: Broude Brothers, 1988), 215–39.
52. M[arina] Sabinina, "Semyon Kotko" i problemi opernoy dramaturgii Prokof'yeva (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1963), 224.
53. This term and its opposite, "nondiegetic," come from film scholarship. See Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 11–30.
54. Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 4–10.
55. Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 67.
56. Skorino, *Pisatel' i yego vremya: Zhizn' i tvorchestvo V. P. Katayeva*, 301. This passage is also translated by Morgan in "A Soldier Came from the Front: New Light on the Literary Sources of Prokofiev's First 'Soviet' Opera *Semyon Kotko*," 9.
57. M[argarita] Aliger, "Dnevnik," in *Uzel. Poeti: Druzhbi i razriiv. Iz literaturnogo bita kontsa 20-x—30-x godov*, ed. Natal'ya Gromova (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2006), 604 (March 31, 1939, diary entry). There is a sarcastic second meaning to Katayev's comment: "Our" (*Nash*) in post-revolutionary parlance meant "Soviet," but the description of Prokofiev as an "acquisition" (*priobreteniy*) suggests that he was not in fact entirely Soviet, that he still needed to adapt.
58. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 42: "Prokofiev had to abbreviate Katayev's libretto and redo those parts that were not in accord with operatic specifics. Disagreements arose between S. Prokofiev and V. Katayev over the makeup of the playbill, since Katayev considered himself to be the sole author of the libretto and did not want Prokofiev's involvement"; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 27, l. 26ob.: "Katayev considered himself to be the sole author of the libretto and did not want to recognize Prokofiev as the co-author. Prokofiev did not desire payment; rather, he wanted the billboard to recognize that the libretto was by Katayev and Prokofiev based on Katayev's story."
59. Prokof'yev and Alpers, "Perepiska," 432.
60. *The Little Boots* (*Cherevichki*, 1885).
61. The borrowings are identified by A. Klimovitskiy, *Opera Prokof'yeva "Semyon Kotko" (Poyasneniye)* (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1961), 32 and 37. Prokofiev and Katayev also decided to include a quotation from the Ukrainian nationalist poet Taras Shevchenko (1814–61) in the opera. Shevchenko's poem "When I die, then make my grave" (*Kak umru, to pokhovayte*, 1845) is included in the act 4, scene 1 choral lament for the victims of the German assault on the village. References to Shevchenko typify socialist realist literature about Ukraine, chiefly because in 1847 the poet invoked the wrath of Tsar Nikolay I for writing anti-imperialist poems.
62. The 1872 collection of folksongs with accompaniment was assembled by Aleksandr Rubets (1837–1913).
63. "Elders, elders, why just sit there...?" (*Shto vi, starosti, starosti, sidite...?*)
64. Sabinina, "Semyon Kotko" i problemi opernoy dramaturgii Prokof'yeva, 155.
65. Tertz, "On Socialist Realism," 190.

66. Information in this and the next paragraph from Medvedeva, “‘Chornoye leto’ 1939 goda,” 318–66, and Fevral’skiy, “Prokof’yev i Meyerkhof’d,” 118–20.
67. Medvedeva, “‘Chornoye leto’ 1939 goda,” 340. The last word in the quotation, “champagne,” is Medvedeva’s assumption: the manuscript is difficult to decipher. If “champagne” is accurate, Prokofiev was perhaps thinking of Johann Strauss: “In [Strauss’s] waltzes,” one of his contemporaries wrote, “a profusion of melodies effervesce and bubble, fizz and froth, dash and sweep like the five hundred thousand devils in the champagne, slipping their bonds and flinging one cork after another into the air.” Quoted in Peter Kemp, “Strauss: (1) Johann Strauss (I): Works,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrell, 29 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 24:477.
68. Medvedeva, “‘Chornoye leto’ 1939 goda,” 333.
69. Ibid., 340.
70. Ibid., 327–28. The quotations are from Prokofiev’s May 28 and 29 letters to Feldman, which Medvedeva transcribes.
71. G[rigoriy] Shneyerson, “Vstrechi s Prokof’yevim,” in *Sergey Prokof’yev: Stat’i i material’i*, 254.
72. Tishler, “Tri vstrechi s Meyerkhof’dom,” quoted in Medvedeva, “‘Chornoye leto’ 1939 goda,” 322.
73. “Vernite mne svobodu!”: *Deyateli literaturni i iskusstva Rossii i Germanii—zhertvi stalinskogo terrora*, ed. V. F. Kolyazin (Moscow: Medium, 1997), 220–40. For a chronicle of the events that preceded and followed Meyerhold’s arrest, see Edward Braun, “Vsevolod Meyerhold: The Final Act,” in *Enemies of the People: The Destruction of the Soviet Literary, Theater, and Film Arts in the 1930s*, ed. Katherine Bliss Eaton (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 145–62.
74. In a notebook entry dated “1938/9,” Prokofiev mentions snubbing Kerzhentsev. “In the [Kislovodsk] sanatorium, Kerzhentsev invited me to play chess. I graciously turned him down.” “Following [Kerzhentsev’s] resignation,” Prokofiev appends, “everyone turned their backs on him.” RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 360b.
75. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 655, l. 260b.
76. Chemberdzhi, *XX vek Lini Prokof’yevoy*, 199.
77. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 334, l. 70b. Prokofiev enlisted Lamm and Derzhanovsky to realize the orchestration from his annotations on the expanded piano score. Between April 22 and June 12, 1940, Prokofiev fashioned a plan for extracting an orchestral suite from the opera. This suite was not finished, however, until June 1, 1943, near the end of Prokofiev’s wartime stay in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 134–36).
78. “Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof’yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna,” in *Sergey Prokof’yev: Stat’i i material’i*, 342–44. The letters are dated July 27 (Eisenstein to Prokofiev about the film) and July 30 (Prokofiev to Eisenstein about the opera). For a translation, see *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 210–13.
79. RGALI f. 2046, op. 1, yed. khr. 260.
80. Ibid. Gorodinsky served as editor in chief of the State Music Publisher (Muzgiz) from 1946 to 1948.
81. Information and quotations in this paragraph from a transcript of the discussion of the performance; RGALI f. 2046 op. 1, yed. khr. 259, ll. 1–4.
82. Serafima Birman, “On ves’ otdal sebya muzike” (He gave all of himself to music), in *S. S. Prokof’yev: Material’i, dokument’i, vospominaniya*, 500–505. This essay dates from the

- summer of 1955; an almost identical typescript, dated July 6, 1954, is preserved in RGALI (f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 994) under the title “I predalsya odnoy muzike” (He abandoned himself only to music).
83. M[jira] A[bramovna] Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Iz vospominaniy,” in *Sergey Prokof’yev 1891–1991: Dnevnik, pis’m’a, besedi, vospominaniya*, 249–50.
 84. Birman, *Sud’boy darovanniy vstrechi*, 1971, quoted in *Prokof’yev o Prokof’yeve: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 184 n. 2.
 85. Birman, “On ves’ otdal sebya muzike,” 502–3.
 86. To abet negotiations with the Third Reich, Molotov in May 1939 replaced Maksim Litvinov (1876–1951), who was Jewish, as foreign minister, while Stalin assumed the chairmanship of the Council of People’s Commissars. Molotov became deputy chairman; he was also a Politburo member.
 87. Skorino, *Pisatel’ i yego vremya: Zhizn’ i tvorchestvo V. P. Katayeva*, 306–7.
 88. Nest’eva, *Sergey Prokof’yev*, 152.
 89. Shostakovich commented on the fiasco in a June 29, 1940, letter to the musicologist Ivan Sollertinsky (1902–44): “I planned, being in Moscow on April 26, to see the premiere of Sergey Prokofiev’s *Semyon Kotko*. I didn’t succeed, however, since the repertory committee still hasn’t given permission for the performance, evidently on the basis of a mechanical substitution of Germans with Austrians. Such is how the opera’s author explained it to me in a telephone conversation.” D[mitriy] D[mitriyevich] Shostakovich, *Pis’m’a I. I. Sollertinskomu* (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2006), 215.
 90. This and the following quotations from *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel’ Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel’ 1939–yanvar’ 1948*, 607–8 n. 4. Solomon Lozovsky (1878–1952) was Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister; Shcheglov was a diplomat.
 91. RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 950, l. 99.
 92. Oleg Prokofiev, “Papers from the Attic: My Father, His Music, and I,” *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 9 (May 2005): 30.
 93. The protocols of the 1940–41 season of the Stanislavsky Theater are preserved in RGALI f. 2482, op. 1, yed. khr. 239–40.
 94. The most positive review was the first: S[emyon] Shlifshteyn, “Semyon Kotko,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, June 29, 1940, p. 3.
 95. Indeed, an entire page of the November 14, 1939, issue of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo* addressed the “stormy disputes” (burniye sporī) surrounding *Into the Storm*. The conflict was reflected in two articles, Ivan Dzherzhinsky’s “A Creative Success” (Tvorcheskaya udacha) and Shlifshteyn’s “Big Ideas and Small Emotions” (Bol’shiye idei i malen’kiye chuvstva). A third article, Georgiy Kreytner’s “A New Soviet Opera” (Novaya sovetskaya opera) reconciled the opposing views in Hegelian fashion.
 96. Tikhon Khrennikov, *O vremeni, o muzike i muzikantakh, o sebe* (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2003), 121–22.
 97. Khrennikov, *Tak eto bilo* (Moscow: Muzika, 1994), 70. The critic refers to Musorgsky’s experimental, prose-based opera *Zhenit’ba* (1868, incomplete).
 98. V[iktor] Tsukkerman, “Neskol’ko misley o sovetskoy opere,” *Sovetskaya muzika* 12 (1940): 67.
 99. Khrennikov, *O vremeni, o muzike i muzikantakh, o sebe*, 121.
 100. Kravetz, “Prokofiev and Sherman: The First Soviet Production of *Romeo and Juliet*,” *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 8 (November 2004): 19. The original source of this quotation is I[say] E. Sherman, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye

- Sergeyeviche Prokof'yeve," in *Dirizhor I. E. Sherman: Stat'i, pis'ma, vospominaniya* (St. Petersburg: Rossiyskiy institut istorii iskusstv, 2002), 55.
101. In Romeo's variation, Prokofiev reused music from the discarded happy ending of the ballet; the passage at rehearsal number 377 of the happy ending recurs intact at rehearsal number 140 of the variation.
 102. Letter of November 16, 1939, quoted in Kravetz, "Prokofiev and Sherman: The First Soviet Production of *Romeo and Juliet*," 19. Kravetz points out that the words "so that even Romeo won't be able to milk applause" read, at first, "so that even [Konstantin] Sergeyev won't manage to milk applause"—a jab at the theatrics of the male lead of the Kirov Ballet.
 103. *Ibid.*, 19–20.
 104. Sherman, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Sergeyeviche Prokof'yeve," 55.
 105. Kravetz, "Prokofiev and Sherman: The First Soviet Production of *Romeo and Juliet*," 20; Sherman, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Sergeyeviche Prokof'yeve," 57–58.
 106. Gayevskiy, *Dom Petipa*, 254.
 107. Before Lavrovsky's proposed alterations to the scenario were enacted, Prokofiev downplayed them in a February 21, 1939, letter to Radlov: "So far nothing to fear: he [Lavrovsky] wants Romeo to stand pensively in Mantua to the music of the entr'acte, and in a different place for him to kill the [Moorish] merchant with the carpets" (RNB f. 625, yed. khr. 465, l. 4). Prokofiev adds that he had to "*put a stop*" to Lavrovsky's "feeble" requests for additional changes, but these changes, notably the inclusion of the solo variations for Romeo and Juliet, obviously ended up being made.
 108. Gayevskiy, *Dom Petipa*, 256–57.
 109. Galina Ulanova, "The Author of My Favorite Ballets," in *Sergei Prokofiev: Materials, Articles, Interviews*, 234.
 110. Sherman, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Sergeyeviche Prokof'yeve," 57.
 111. Kravetz reveals that "the handwritten score, on which Prokofiev had made pencil corrections, was subsequently mutilated in a barbaric fashion. When Sherman conducted *Romeo and Juliet* at the Shakespeare festival in Leningrad (1964), many handwritten sheets had been torn out and replaced with printed ones and orchestral markings in the composer's hand had disappeared without a trace. As a result a complete, authorized score of the second version is unavailable in the Russian archives. In the Glinka Museum there are separate pages from the first and second acts, but it is not known whether they belonged to the composer. The score—published in 1961 (Moskva: Muzgiz) in the Complete Works of Prokofiev (volumes 8A and B)—gives no indication of the source from which the score was published." "Prokofiev and Sherman: The First Soviet Production of *Romeo and Juliet*," 21 n. 29.
 112. Letter of April 30, 1940, quoted in *ibid.*, 20; translation adjusted.
 113. Letter of November 15, 1972, from Boris Khaykin to Mikhaïl Khrapchenko, in *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel' Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel' 1939-yanvar' 1948*, 549.
 114. RGASPI f. 17, op. 163, d. 1257, l. 87.
 115. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 111, l. 1; *Prokof'yeve o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yū*, 174.
 116. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 150, l. 14.
 117. Unsigned, "Reviewer's Notebook," *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1938, p. C5.
 118. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 273, l. 2.
 119. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 354, l. 41 (letter of June 7, 1939).
 120. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 150, l. 23.

121. Unsigned, “Prokofieff Unable to Come to America,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1940, p. 24.
122. *Tvorchestvo narodov SSSR. XX let Velikoy Oktyabr'skoy sotsialisticheskoy revolyutsii v SSSR. 1917–1937*, ed. A. M. Gor'kiy and L. Z. Mekhlis (Moscow: Izd. Redaktsii “Pravdi,” 1937), 105–6, 121–22, and 130.
123. *Ibid.*, 100–104.
124. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 835, l. 5; Grigoriy Pantiyev, “Prokof'yev: razmishleniya, svidetel'stva, spori. Beseda s Gennadiyem Rozhdstvenskim,” *Sovetskaya muzika* 4 (1991): 11 and 13.
125. *Bol'shaya tsenzura: Pisateli i zhurnalisti v strane sovetov 1917–1956*, comp. and introd. L. V. Maksimenkov; ed. A. N. Yakovlev (Moscow: Mezhdunarodniy fond “Demokratiya,” 2005), 9.
126. “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 235. Prokofiev refers to Andrew Steiger's translation of the *Alexander Nevsky* libretto.
127. Mashistov wrote two opera librettos for the composer Aleksandr Kholminov (b. 1925), *An Optimistic Tragedy* (*Optimisticheskaya tragediya*, 1965, after Vsevolod Vishnevsky's play) and *Anna Snegina* (1967, after Sergey Esenin's poem).
128. Mashistov revised the text of the *Cantata for the Thirtieth Anniversary of October* for the 1962 edition.
129. “Nikogda tak ne bilo / Pole zeleno / Nebivaloy radosti / Vsyo selo polno / Nikogda nam ne bila / Zhizn' tak vesela / Nikogda dosel' u nas / Rozh' tak ne tsvela.”
130. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 255.
131. Most *chastushki* are lewd four-line rhymes, but in the Soviet period their subject matter expanded to include Communist slogans and anti-religious propaganda.
132. The collection in question, comprising seven songs, was premiered on March 15, 1939, on State Radio.
133. “S. Prokofiev's *Zdravitsa*, a masterfully written composition for chorus and orchestra, fresh and uplifting in its musical language, serves as an artistic expression of the multinational Soviet people's feelings of pride and joy in their newfound happiness”; “S. S. Prokofiev's *Zdravitsa*... made a magnificent impression in the first concert. The composition is unusually clear, bright in color and noble in simplicity.” RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 948, no. 196 (unsigned, “Prazdnichniy kontsert v Bol'shom zale konservatorii,” *Vechernyaya Moskva*, December 22, 1939), and no. 203 (unsigned, “Yubileyniye kontserti,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, December 29, 1939).
134. T[amara] Livanova and Yu[riy] Keldish, “Obraz Stalina v muzike,” *Sovetskaya muzika* 12 (1949): 20.
135. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, l. 8.
136. Oleg Prokofiev, “Papers from the Attic: My Father, His Music, and I,” 28.
137. Vladimir Zak, “Prokof'yev obnimayet mir,” *Muzeyniy listok: Prilozheniye k rossiyskoy muzikal'noy gazete* 40 (November 2003), p. 2.
138. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

1. “Editorial Eulogy of A. S. Pushkin, ‘The Glory of the Russian People,’ *Pravda* 10 February 1937,” in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, ed.

- Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 215–16.
2. Stephanie Sandler, "The 1937 Pushkin Jubilee as Epic Trauma," in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, 199. For an account of the centennial's realization, see pp. 193–213. The deposed Comintern leader Karl Radek (1885–1939) died in prison; he was not actually executed. Yuriy Pyatakov (1890–1937) was Deputy Heavy Industry Minister.
 3. Prokof'yev and Alpers, "Perepiska," 428.
 4. "Postanovleniye Politbyuro TsK VKP(b) ob uchrezhdenii Vsesoyuznogo Pushkinskogo Komiteta," in *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VChK-OGPU-NKVD, o kul'turnoy politike. 1917–1953 gg.*, 218–19.
 5. Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 301.
 6. Ibid.
 7. "Iz vospominaniy O. Litovskogo 'Tak i bilo,'" in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevе: Stat'i, interv'y*, 133.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Vadim Perel'muter, "'Traktat o tom, kak nevigodno bit' talantlivim,'" in Sigizmund Krzhizhanovskiy, *Vospominaniya o budushchem: Izbrannoye iz neizdannogo* (Moscow: Moskovskiy rabochiy, 1989), 14–15.
 10. This and the next quotation from "Iz besedi s rezhissyorami-vipusknikami Gosudarstvennogo instituta teatral'nogo iskusstva imeni A. V. Lunacharskogo," in A. Ya. Tairov, *Zapiski rezhissyora. Stat'i. Besedi. Rechi. Pis'ma*, ed. P. Markov (Moscow: Izdaniye Vserossiyskogo teatral'nogo obshchestva, 1970), 252–53. The "Decembrist" reading did not spring from Tairov's imagination. Pushkin contemplated ending *Eugene Onegin* with Onegin either dying in the Caucasus or joining the Decembrist movement. This is the content of the "burnt" book 10. Scholars of the Stalinist period used the extant lines from this book, and the contents of an 1829 letter from the author to his brother, to refute the "anti-historical" supposition that Pushkin regarded the Decembrist movement unfavorably. See, for example, N. L. Brodskiy, *Yevgeniy Onegin: Roman A. S. Pushkina. Posobiye dlya uchiteley sredney shkoly* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye uchebno-pedagogicheskoye izdatel'stvo ministerstva prosveshcheniya RSFSR, 1950), 351–84.
 11. Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. and commentary by Vladimir Nabokov, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 1:117.
 12. E[lizaveta] Dattel', "'Yevgeniy Onegin' S. Prokof'yeva (neosushchestvlyonniy muzikal'no-dramaticheskii spektakl' v Kamernom teatre)," in *Muzikal'niy sovremennik*, vol. 2, ed. L. V. Danilevich (Moscow: Sovetskiiy kompozitor, 1977), 10. An earlier version of this essay is reproduced in Prokof'yev, *Yevgeniy Onegin. Muzikal'no-dramaticheskaya kompozitsiya po odnoimennomu romanu A. S. Pushkina dlya chtetsa, aktyorov i simfonicheskogo orkestra. Partitura i avtorskiye pereložheniye dlya fortepiano* (Moscow: Sovetskiiy kompozitor, 1973), 231–44. This version of the score was edited by Dattel with the composer G. S. Zinger, who completed the orchestration based on Prokofiev's annotations.
 13. The commission included Sergey Bondi (1891–1983), Leonid Grossman (1888–1965), Mstislav Tsyavlovsky (1883–1947), Tatyana Tsyavlovskaya-Zenger (1897–1978), Vikentiy Veresayev (1867–1945), and Grigoriy Vinokur (1896–1947)—pioneering textologists who devoted their careers to assembling and annotating the Pushkin corpus.
 14. "Kalendar 'Onegina,'" RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 86; f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 253.

15. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 85. The autograph originally contained 44 numbers, but three of them (Nos. 38–40) went missing, only to turn up at a Christie's auction. See Clive Bennett, "Prokofiev and Eugene Onegin," *Musical Times* (April 1980): 231. No. 26, a Stravinsky-inspired chorus titled "Mummers" (Ryazheniye), exists in two versions: the first for voice and piano, the second for voice, violins, oboe, and tambourine. The autograph also includes sketches of two mass songs, "The Soldier's [Fighter's] Sweetheart" (Podruga boytsa) and "Fritz," which Prokofiev included in his *Seven Mass Songs* (*Sem' massovikh pesen*) of 1942. Another, complete piano score, in Lamm's hand, survives in the RGALI holding of the theatrical designer and collector Vasilii Fyodorov (1891–1973): f. 2579, op. 1, yed. khr. 991. It became the basis of the 2005 recording by Jurowski, Capriccio 67 149/50.
16. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 85, l. 6.
17. Caryl Emerson, "The Krzhizhanovsky-Prokofiev Collaboration on *Eugene Onegin*, 1936 (A Lesser-Known Casualty of the Pushkin Death Jubilee)," in *Sergey Prokofiev and His World*, 71–72.
18. A. S., "'Yevgeniy Onegin'—dramaticheskii spektakl'. Beseda s nar. art. resp. A. Ya. Tairovim," *Krasnaya gazeta*, April 20, 1936, p. 2; unsigned, "'Yevgeniy Onegin' v drame. Beseda s nar. artistom A. Ya. Tairovim," *Vechnyaya Moskva*, April 23, 1936, p. 3. The last line of the quoted passage is not included in the second source.
19. Prokofiev, *Soviet Diary 1927 and Other Writings*, 301.
20. "Kompozitor v dramaticheskom teatre: Beseda s S. S. Prokof'yevim," in S. S. Prokof'yev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 219.
21. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, 1: 262.
22. See Taruskin, "Yevgeniy Onegin," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 4 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1994), 4:1193–94.
23. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, 1:294.
24. Olga Peters Hasty, *Pushkin's Tatiana* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 10.
25. She apparently sought advice on her work from Mira Mendelson, Prokofiev's second wife. See Medvedeva, "Elizaveta Dattel' in Memoriam," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Pis'ma, vospominaniya, stat'i*, 311–12.
26. Dattel', "'Yevgeniy Onegin' S. Prokof'yeva (neosushchestvlyonnyy muzikal'no-dramaticheskii spektakl' v Kamernom teatre)," 9.
27. I am grateful to Daniil Zavlunov for these and other details about the edition.
28. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 86, l. 38.
29. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, 1:262.
30. Malfilâtre's words make up the epigraph to book 3 of *Eugene Onegin*.
31. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 21 (*Notograficheskii spravochnik*), l. 260b. The contract specified an 8,000-ruble payment and an August 15, 1936, deadline for the piano score. A separate "work agreement" (*trudovoye soglasheniye*) specified another 8,000-ruble payment for the orchestration—due October 1, 1936—and for Prokofiev's presence during the rehearsals, with the caveat that he would be away from Moscow between December 1 and February 10, 1937 (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, ll. 21–22). The cancellation of the production resulted in a breach of contract; as late as June 14, 1938, Prokofiev had still not been paid for the orchestration. On that day, he submitted a complaint to the Chamber Theater (RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 333).
32. Information in this paragraph from A. M. Dubrovsky, "Chronicle of a Poet's Downfall: Dem'ian Bednyi, Russian History, and *The Epic Heroes*," in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, 77–98.

33. *Bol'shaya tsenzura: Pisateli i zhurnalisti v Strane Sovetov*. 1917–1956, 286 n. 11.
34. Quoted in Dubrovsky, “Chronicle of a Poet’s Downfall: Dem’ian Bednyi, Russian History, and *The Epic Heroes*,” 93. On the Politburo–Committee on Arts Affairs decision, see Maksimenkov, *Sumbur umesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 220–21.
35. “The Reaction of Writers and Artists to the Banning of D. Bednyi’s Comic Opera,” in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, 100–101; translation adjusted.
36. Malcolm H. Brown identifies the other quotations from *Eugene Onegin* in the opera in “Prokofiev’s *War and Peace*: A Chronicle,” *Musical Quarterly* 43:3 (July 1977): 317.
37. For the list, see Tamara Sergeyeva, “‘Pikovaya dama’: Shto snitsya cheloveku...,” *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski* 42 (1999): 220–21.
38. Anatoly Vishevsky, “‘The Queen of Spades’ Revisited, Revisited, and Revisited...: How Time Changed Accents,” *Russian Studies in Literature* 40:2 (Spring 2004): 21.
39. Mikhail Romm, *Izbranniye proizvedeniya v 3-x tomakh*, ed. L. I. Belova et al. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1981), 2:159; also quoted in Vishevsky, “‘The Queen of Spades’ Revisited, Revisited, and Revisited...: How Time Changed Accents,” 22.
40. Romm, *Izbranniye proizvedeniya v 3-x tomakh*, 2:159.
41. *Ibid.*, 2:157.
42. *Ibid.*, 2:156.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, 2:157. Romm bases this claim on Pushkin’s 1830 poem “My Genealogy” (*Moya rodoslovnaya*), in which the poet declares petit bourgeois origins. The poem, however, is parodic.
45. Unsigned, “‘Pikovaya dama’ v tsvetnom kino,” *Kino (Moskva)*, February 11, 1937, p. 2.
46. Romm lauded Pushkin’s story for what he considered to be its proto-cinematic traits, arguing, for instance, that the writer experimented with the verbal equivalent of visual montage. See Romm, *Besedi o kino* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964), 116–21.
47. “Rabota i plani S. Prokof’yeva,” in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yev: Stat'i, interv'yū*, 135.
48. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, l. 3. The contract specified a total payment of 15,000 rubles for the score, with the first draft of the music to be delivered by June 10.
49. Romm, *Izbranniye proizvedeniya v 3-x tomakh*, 2:144–45. Sokolovskaya sought advice on the scenario from a Central Committee member, Yan Gamarnik (1894–1937), who ensured its prohibition. For additional details about this period in Romm’s career, see his “Avtobiografiya,” in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 1063–65.
50. Unsigned, “‘Pikovaya dama’ v kino,” *Kino (Moskva)*, June 4, 1937, p. 4.
51. Unsigned, “Planirovat’ ekranizatsiyu klassikov,” *Kino (Moskva)*, June 28, 1937, p. 3.
52. Pentslin completed the preparatory work on *The Queen of Spades* in Romm’s place.
53. For the history of this film and an overview of Mosfilm’s activities in 1937, see Maya Turovskaya “‘Mosfil’m’—1937,” *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski* 50 (2001): 198–218.
54. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 93. The episodes are: (1) Overture; (2) Wandering; (3) Wandering (Hermann in front of the Countess’s residence); (4) Liza; (5) Hermann at home; (6) Morning; (7) Hermann sees Liza; (8) Hermann delivers a letter to Liza; (9) Liza reads the letter; (10) Liza muses and writes a reply; (11) Liza enters with the letter for Hermann; (12) Hermann reads the letter (Hermann in front of the Countess’s residence); (13) Hermann in Liza’s room; (14) Ball; (15) Liza alone in her room; (16) Hermann playing cards alone; (17) The Countess’s visit; (18) Hermann makes a note, conceals it, and

- comes to the casino; (19) First win; (20) Hermann goes to the casino a second time; (21) Second win; (22) Hermann goes to the casino a third time; (23) Hermann loses; (24) Final encounter.
55. Romm, *Izbranniye proizvedeniya v 3-x tomakh*, 2: 159.
 56. Ibid. for Prokofiev's comments; Romm did not explain why Prokofiev scorned the opera. Elsewhere, the composer observed that "Chaikovsky departed further from the Pushkin original in *The Queen of Spades* than in *Eugene Onegin*. To take just one example: for Chaikovsky, the central figure, Hermann, is lyrically and passionately in love with Liza; for Pushkin, he is a gambler who casually latches on to the Countess's very young ward and transforms her into a tool for the achievement of his aims" ("Moi plani," 142).
 57. Letter of July 26, 1936, in S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 449.
 58. Pushkin, "Pikovaya dama," in *Polnoye sobraniye sochineniy v desyati tomakh*, 3rd ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1962–66), 6:355.
 59. The manuscript is RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 95.
 60. "Dokladnaya zapiska S. S. Dukel'skogo V. M. Molotovu o tematicheskome plane proizvodstva kinokartin na 1938 g.," in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenty*, 489–90.
 61. Romm, *Izbranniye proizvedeniya v 3-x tomakh*, 2:163.
 62. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 31.
 63. See *Meyerkhof'd repetiruet*, ed. M. M. Sitkovetskaya, 2 vols. (Moscow: Artist. Rezhissyor. Teatr, 1993), 2:218: "Not only external events, but also the internal situation at GosTIM [the State Meyerhold Theater] interfered with the realization of the conception. The situation inside the theater became increasingly difficult. Z[inaida] N. Raykh often irritably rebuked the actors who refused to accept the director's suggestions, further poisoning the atmosphere."
 64. Ibid., 2:217. The year 1937 was not only the Pushkin centennial but also the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, in tribute to which Meyerhold began work on a production of *One Life* (*Odnazhizn'*), based on Nikolay Ostrovsky's novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* (*Kak zakalyalas' stal'*, 1934). The Committee on Arts Affairs curtailed the production on account of its anti-doctrinaire "naturalism" and "pessimism" (Maksimenkov, *Sumbur umesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 270–72).
 65. See *Bol'shaya tsenzura: Pisateli i zhurnalisti v Strane Sovetov. 1917–1956*, 463–65.
 66. Meyerhold was indirectly targeted in the *Pravda* editorial "Muddle Instead of Music." Following his denunciation in a December 17, 1937, article in the same newspaper, Meyerhold expressed remorse for his approach to *Boris Godunov*: "The entire composition should have been subordinated to a painstaking study of the internal world [of the heroes]." *Meyerkhof'd repetiruet*, 2:218.
 67. "O likvidatsii teatra im. Vs. Meyerkhof'da," in *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)–VKP(b), VChK–OGPU–NKVD, o kul'turnoy politike. 1917–1953 gg.*, 385–86.
 68. Pushkin's drama features two of the poet's forebears, one (Gavrila) who collaborated with the Pretender and another (Afanasiy) who opposed the Tsar domestically.
 69. Esenina, O V. E. *Meyerkhof'de i Z. N. Raykh: Pis'ma K. L. Rudnitskomu*, 129. The fact that Esenina was abroad in 1936 attests to the exceptional privileges accorded Meyerhold in 1936. Prokofiev traveled abroad as well in 1936, but he was not allowed to bring his children with him.
 70. Pushkin, *Boris Godunov*, trans. Philip L. Barbour (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), 59; italics added. The translation has been adjusted to make it more literal.
 71. During the *Boris Godunov* rehearsals, construction was under way on Triumphal (Mayakovsky) Square for a permanent home for the Meyerhold Theater. In 1937 construction

was delayed and, in 1938, halted following the Politburo decision to terminate Meyerhold's activities. Triumphant Square instead became the home of the Chaikovsky Concert Hall and the Satiric Theater. Neither of these buildings approaches the radicalism of Meyerhold's architectural plan, which envisioned a multi-purpose, multi-tiered space that would absorb the audience into the stage action and bear the look and feel of a marketplace.

72. From a discussion with members of the Vakhtangov Theater, quoted in *Meyerkhof'd i kbudozhniki*, ed. A. A. Mikhaylova (Moscow: Galart, 1995), 275.
73. *Meyerkhof'd repetiruet*, 2: 213.
74. Emerson argues that the scene of the "Evil Monk" ("Ograda monastir'skaya [Zloy chernets]"), like that of the "stock-in-trade but crucial figures of Varlaam and Misail," reflects Pushkin's conception of the drama as a historical comedy. Pushkin, Emerson writes, infused the text with "gossip, slander, rumor, [and] cynical realism," which operate "not merely as comic relief from the 'real' tragic plot but as an agent *in* that plot, as an instigator of genuine historical change." "Tragedy, Comedy, Carnival, and History on Stage," in Chester Dunning with Caryl Emerson, Sergei Fomichev, Lidiia Lotman, and Antony Wood, *The Uncensored Boris Godunov* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 175.
75. V. A. Pyast, "K stsene so zlim chernetsom," RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 591, l. 5.
76. Anthony Wood observes that, when divided mid-line, trochaic octometer resembles stylized folk epic, the implication being that the dream is a manifestation of ancestral poetic memory. "Translator's Preface," in *The Uncensored Boris Godunov*, 240.
77. Prokofiev had qualms about the project at first, as evidenced by a September 8, 1934, letter he wrote to Meyerhold from the South of France: "I was very disturbed by your claim that I'd promised to write music for your 'Boris.' On the other hand, the project does sound interesting, if I could figure out how to approach it. So far I haven't figured that out, and especially with all your instruments I'm not sure how to proceed—I don't know how they would sound." *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 85.
78. I. Glikman, *Meyerkhof'd i muzikal'nyi teatr* (Leningrad: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1989), 328.
79. Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 101. The embedded quotations come from V[alentin] S. Nepomnyashchii, *Poeziya i sud'ba*, 1983.
80. Emerson, "Tragedy, Comedy, Carnival, and History on Stage," 176.
81. *Meyerhold at Work*, ed. Paul Schmidt (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), 115.
82. Prokofiev did, however, reuse the opening of the battle scene music in act 3, scene 7 of *Semyon Kotko* (rehearsal number 284). In the opera, the music sounds behind the scenes to signal the arrival of a German brigade.
83. In Pushkin's text, Mnishek comments about the resplendent gathering: "We old men no longer dance; we are not drawn to the thundering of music." Pushkin, *Boris Godunov*, 85; translation adjusted.
84. Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, 22–23.
85. *Meyerkhof'd repetiruet*, 2:300.
86. *Ibid.*, 2:241. This statement is from an August 4, 1936, rehearsal.
87. The quotation is from p. 102 of Prokofiev's annotated copy of *Dramaticheskiiye proizvedeniya A. S. Pushkina* (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1935), preserved in RGALI, fond 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 37. The composer repaginated the publication to accommodate Meyerhold's insertions.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

89. See Taruskin, *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1:856–57.
90. The letter is reproduced in V. Gromov, “Zamisel postanovki,” in *Tvorcheskoye naslediyе V. E. Meyerkhоl'da*, ed. L. D. Vendrovskaya and A. V. Fevral'skiy (Moscow: Vserossiyskoye teatral'noye obshchestvo, 1978), 399. The author dates the letter “August or September 1936.”
91. Fevral'skiy, “Prokof'yev i Meyerkhоl'd,” 113.
92. *Ibid.*, 113–14.
93. Prokofiev described the structure of the chorus in the manuscript of the piano-vocal score as follows: “The organizing principles of this episode are: 8 measures, of which the 7th and 8th exist in two versions. The first version modulates a tone higher (the mood intensifies); the second version modulates a tone lower (the mood falls). These eight-measure groups can be combined as necessary. In the present instance there is a rise of three scale degrees, then a fall of three scale degrees, but it can be otherwise. Now and again a theme appears above (two variants), but it should not be situated in two successive eight-measure groups” (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 87, l. 6). This same description appears in the published conductor's score, which was orchestrated by Lamm according to Prokofiev's instructions.
94. Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme*, 97.
95. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 37, l. 34.
96. Meyerhold staged *Tristan und Isolde* in St. Petersburg in 1909.
97. Schmidt, *Meyerhold at Work*, 114.
98. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 37, l. 113. Meyerhold is obviously referring here to the delirium suffered by the dying Prince Andrey in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The director prefigures what Prokofiev would achieve in his operatic treatment of the novel.
99. Schmidt, *Meyerhold at Work*, 114: “In this part we will hear leitmotifs from the ball scene and other bits. We will get Grigoriy's dream.”
100. During a November 27, 1936, rehearsal Meyerhold quipped: “What was it in this subject [Boris Godunov] that so frightened Nicholas I and the censors? Because a presentation of historical events was so much more terrifying from Pushkin that it would have been from any other writer of the period.” Schmidt, *Meyerhold at Work*, 126.
101. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 87, l. 30b.
102. Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme*, 63.
103. Kerzhentsev, “Chuzhoy teatr,” quoted in Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 276.
104. Emerson and Robert William Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 191: “In 1568 Ivan the Terrible, at the height of his reign of terror, forbade the writing of chronicles, a ban that lingered by inertia until 1630.”
105. Schmidt, *Meyerhold at Work*, 101.

CHAPTER 4

1. Information in this paragraph from Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, “Iz vospominaniy,” 236–41.
2. Lina Prokofiev, interview with MB, November 1967.
3. Lina Prokofiev, interview with MB, April 1–2, 1985.
4. The RGAE catalog describes Mendelson (1885–1968) as an “economist, specialist in the sphere of political economy, doctor of economic science, member of the Presidium of

- USSR Gosplan [State Planning Commission], board member of the TsSU [Central Statistics Agency], director of the balance sector of the Institute of Economics of the AN [Academy of Sciences], Professor.” His personal file (*lichnoye delo*), fills in the details of his youth and early adulthood. Born in Kiev, he was arrested in 1905 and 1906 for participating in student protests and expelled from the Law Faculty at Kiev University. He relocated in 1914 to Moscow, where he became a member of the General Jewish Labor Union (Bund) and the Menshevik movement, a faction of the Russian revolutionary movement aligned with Julius Martov rather than Vladimir Lenin. He renounced his ties with these organizations in April 1920, when he joined the Communist Party. In 1921 he entered the Red Professorial Institute (Institut Krasnoy Professuri), which trained its students in the propagation of Marxist-Leninist dogma. A 1933 commission charged with purging the Party rank and file deemed Mendelson “trustworthy” on the basis of his active political work (RGASPI f. 17, op. 100, d. 74112, l. 8). His RGAE holding includes four letters written by Prokofiev and six by Mira, dated from October 20, 1942, to April 16, 1945.
5. The first award, bestowed in November 1933, dubbed her a “leading activist of socialist construction, actively showing her worth in the effort to fulfill, on the residential and domestic front, the six objectives of the 1st and 2nd years of Comrade Stalin’s Five-Year Plan”; the second award, from June 1935, was for “active social work.” RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 176, ll. 29 and 43.
 6. Mira’s Gorky Institute records are located in RGALI f. 632, op. 1, yed. khr. 1917. Page 20 shows that she applied in July 1936 for a transfer into the second year of the program of studies, but, owing to the weakness of her sample work, which included a March 1936 translation “from Hebrew” of a poem titled “A Letter to Voroshilov” (Pis’mo Voroshilovu), she was placed in the first year. Her grades matched those of her peers. According to the records of the State Examination Commission, her final exams at the Institute, taken on October 31 and November 3, 1939, involved translating poems by Robert Burns and W. H. Auden and producing essays on Gavrila Derzhavin’s works, Aleksandr Ostrovsky’s dramaturgy, and Vladimir Mayakovsky’s satire (RGALI f. 632, op. 1, yed. khr. 142, ll. 31 and 33).
 7. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Iz vospominaniy,” 241; RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 669.
 8. Mira was by most accounts a dutiful, serious, and withdrawn individual, the antithesis of Prokofiev’s vivacious, quick-witted, outgoing wife. Valentina Chemberdzhii remembers Mira habitually “dressed in black, which accentuated the thinness and frailness of her figure even more. At the time I saw and knew her, she was the embodiment of goodness and meekness” (*V dome muzika zhila: Memuari o muzikantakh*, 100).
 9. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Iz vospominaniy,” 240.
 10. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 465, l. 10b.
 11. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Iz vospominaniy,” 244.
 12. *Ibid.*, 245–46; RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 393, l. 4.
 13. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Iz vospominaniy,” 252.
 14. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 655, l. 260b.
 15. Prokofiev put a cheerful face on the situation in an English-language letter to Ephraim Gottlieb, a Chicago-based insurance agent and longtime (from 1920) acquaintance who served as Prokofiev’s de facto representative in the United States: “Madam Prokofieff spends a month in Crimea: she likes the sea and is not afraid of the heat, while I prefer the mountains where it is cooler. The children are in a country place, on a lake between Moscow and Leningrad enjoying swimming, fishing, etc.” Unpublished letter of August 16, 1939; photocopy in the possession of MB.

16. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 655, l. 260b.
17. Lina Prokofiev, interview with MB, November 1967.
18. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 464, l. 15; English-language portion of the quotation italicized.
19. *Ibid.*, l. 16.
20. Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 102; RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 464, l. 17.
21. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 253.
22. Lina Prokofiev, interviews with MB, April 1–2, 1985 and November 1967.
23. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 247.
24. Romain Rolland, *Beethoven the Creator*, trans. Ernest Newman (1929; repr., New York: Dover, 1964), 147.
25. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 3 (March 8, 1940, diary entry).
26. See Chia-Hui Tsai, "Sonata Form Innovations in Prokofiev's Nine Piano Sonatas" (D.M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2003), 57–63.
27. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 986, ll. 1–3. Prokofiev seemed relieved that the work had been well received, humbly informing the gathering (there were eight adjudicators in all) that "I chose a somewhat more complex language and feared that it would be less accessible." He added, with a nod to Abramsky, that he sought to "substitute figuration with contrapuntal material or a texture formed with different principles" (*ibid.*, l. 19).
28. Sviatoslav Richter [Rikhter], *Notebooks and Conversations*, ed. and introd. Bruno Monsiegeon, trans. Stewart Spencer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 73–74.
29. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 219.
30. Material for the Sixth Sonata appears on p. 22 of a sketchbook begun on May 14, 1935 (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 287); additional material for this and the other two sonatas appears on pp. 16, 19, 21, and 24 in a sketchbook begun on May 31, 1936 (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 288).
31. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 217.
32. Deborah Anne Rifkin, "Tonal Coherence in Prokofiev's Music: A Study of the Interrelationships of Structure, Motives, and Design" (Ph. D. diss., University of Rochester, 2000), 77–83.
33. Richter, *Notebooks and Conversations*, 81.
34. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 57. Prokofiev learned of the award on March 22, 1943.
35. Taruskin, "Betrothal in a Monastery," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, 1:459; quoted words from Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 248.
36. Taruskin, "Betrothal in a Monastery," 1:460.
37. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 246–48. The composer also considered setting Shakespeare.
38. The following synopsis from Hugh McLean, *Nikolai Leskov: The Man and His Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), 166–72.
39. The following information and quotations from Prokofiev's autograph scenario for *The Spendthrift* (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 16, ll. 1–3).
40. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 182, l. 3.
41. The following information from Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 248–51.
42. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 20.
43. RGALI f. 2484, op. 1, yed. khr. 237a, l. 10.
44. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, ll. 4–5.

45. "Radio reportazh," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevye: Stat'i, interv'yuy*, 186. Prokofiev felt that Sheridan's title, *The Duenna*, would sound strange in Russian, and so he decided to retitle the opera *Betrothal in a Monastery*; both titles are now habitually used.
46. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 249.
47. For an overview, see L[arisa] G[eyorgyevna] Dan'ko, *Teatr Prokof'yeva v Peterburge* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii proyekt, 2003), 76–85.
48. "Prokof'yev rasskazivayet o svoey posledney opere po 'Duen'ye' Sheridana," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevye: Stat'i, interv'yuy*, 187.
49. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 12 (111 pages) and 19 (75 pages).
50. "The breath of morn bids hence the night," sung by Antonio in tableau 1, scene 4; "If a daughter you have, it's the plague of your life," sung by Jerome in tableau 2, scene 5; "When sable night," sung by Clara in tableau 3, scene 3; "Gentle maid, ah! Why suspect me?" sung by Don Carlos in tableau 3, scene 6; "When a tender maid is first essay'd," sung by the duenna in tableau 4, scene 3; and "This bottle's the sun of our table," sung by the monks in tableau 8, scene 1. Taruskin, "*Betrothal in a Monastery*," 1:459.
51. For a thorough discussion of the writing of the libretto, see Dan'ko, *Teatr Prokof'yeva v Peterburge*, 43–75.
52. Prokof'yev, *Duen'ya (Obrucheniy v monastire): Liriko-komicheskaya opera v 4-x deystviyakh, 9-ti kartinakh* (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1960), 79.
53. "Obrucheniy v monastire," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevye: Stat'i, interv'yuy*, 189. The article is dated January 17, 1941.
54. D[mitriy] Shostakovich, "Zhizneradostniy spektakl'," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, January 17, 1947, p. 4.
55. Lina Prokof'yeva, "Iz vospominaniy," 224.
56. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 20b.
57. The history of the project is detailed by I. Rayskin, "Kak teatr Kirova ne stal teatrom Shostakovicha: dokumental'noye povestvovaniye," *Ars Peterburg: Rossiyskiy zhurnal iskusstv* 1 (1993): 94–98.
58. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 1.
59. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 751, l. 1 (letter of January 14, 1941). The phrase "If a claw is caught, the whole bird is lost" (*Kogotok uvyaz—vsey ptichke propast'*) is the epigram, perhaps even the alternate title, to Tolstoy's 1888 drama *The Power of Darkness* (*Vlast' t'mi*).
60. TsGALI SpB f. 337, op. 1, d. 206, l. 21 (act I, scene 2 of the opera).
61. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 1.
62. Atovm'yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 3, p. 7.
63. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 4. "Song of the Brave" (*Pesnya smelikh*) and the Mayakovsky-based song, "Admiral's Trash" (*Dryan' admiral'skaya*), composed in Kratovo in July 1941, became the second and first songs of Prokofiev's *Seven Mass Songs* of 1942. The collection contains simply rhymed, strophic settings that evince, now and again, signs of Prokofiev's melodic cleverness. Songs three and four, "The Tankman's Oath" (*Klyatva tankista*) and "The Son of Kabarda" (*Sin Kabardi*), set to texts by Mira, date from November 1941. They fulfilled a commission for 1,000 rubles from the Radio Committee in Nalchik for a literary and musical program about Kabardino-Balkarian heroes of the war. Songs five and six, "The Soldier's [Fighter's] Sweetheart" and "Fritz," also to texts by Mira, date from May 1942. They fulfilled a commission, also for 1,000 rubles, from the Red Army Song and Dance Ensemble in Tbilisi. The final song of the collection is taken from the score of the film *Tonya*. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 22 (*Notograficheskiiy spravochnik*), l. 1.

64. For some of the evacuees' names, see O[l]ga Lamm, "Druz'ya Pavla Aleksandrovich Lamma. V evakuatsii (1941–1943)," in *Iz proshlogo sovetskoy muzikal'noy kul'turi*, vol. 2, ed. T. N. Livanova (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Sovetskiy kompozitor," 1976), 99–100.
65. Lina Prokofiev, interview with MB, April 1–2, 1985.
66. Letter of March 8, 1942, in "Prokofiev and Atovm'yan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 201.
67. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 15: "Seryozha played through the Fifth and Sixth Scenes for me. Pierre is just as Tolstoy portrays him, which is astonishing, since he is so difficult to convert into an opera character without confusion or recourse to simplification. As usual, Natasha appears just as you see her in the pages of the novel."
68. Atovm'yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 3, p. 9.
69. The suite was premiered on January 21, 1943, in Sverdlovsk (Yekaterinburg) by the State Radio Orchestra under the direction of Nikolay Rabinovich (1908–72).
70. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, l. 19. Prokofiev composed two string quartets in his career; the first (1930) was a commission from the Library of Congress.
71. Lina Prokofiev worked from home as a translator for the agency during the war; Afinogenov helped her to obtain the part-time position.
72. "Khudozhnik i vojna," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'y*, 206.
73. S. I. Taneyev, "O muzike gorskikh tatar," in *Pamyati Sergeya Ivanovicha Taneyeva 1856–1946. Sbornik statey i materialov k 90-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya*, ed. VI. Protopopov (Moscow and Leningrad: Muzgiz, 1947), 205.
74. *Ibid.*, 204. According to Taneyev, the song is played by "shepherds on a pipe in order to settle down their sheep at night. The shepherd plays; the sheep gather together."
75. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 4 (April 17, 1943, entry); letter of April 24, 1943, in S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 467.
76. *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel' Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel' 1939-yanvar' 1948*, 596–97.
77. In a letter dated September 23, 1942, Myaskovsky informed Prokofiev that "I only just received a postcard from Derzhanovsky: in Moscow they played your 2nd quartet and it made an excellent impression, even the 'Scythian' (his word) 1st movement and motley finale" (S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 460). The published reviews of the work were neutral. G. Kovrov, for example, commented, "The quartet was written in a manner typical for Prokofiev in recent years. In the elucidation of the musical language we find here his typically harsh, 'granite' sounds (especially in the first movement), tender lyricism (the second, slow movement), and an original, perhaps questionable but clearly individual approach to the treatment of folksong material." "Kontserti kvarteta im. Betkhovena," *Literatura i iskusstvo*, September 12, 1942, p. 4.
78. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 189 and 190. The tempo shifts from 96 to 104 beats per minute.
79. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 15 (December 23, 1941, entry).
80. Brown, "Prokofiev's *War and Peace*: A Chronicle," 302.
81. These characters are described by Tolstoy in Book 4, pt. 1, chap. 11 of his novel.
82. The composer Vasilii Nechayev (1895–1956) and his wife, the conductor Aleksandr Gauk (1893–1963) and his wife, the composer Anatoliy Aleksandrov (1888–1982) and his wife, the actress Valeriya Massalitinova (1878–1945), and Nikolay Myaskovsky and his second sister Valentina (1886–1965).
83. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 10–17. Information and quotations in the following paragraphs from ll. 18–23.
84. His duties included gathering scores for evaluation by the Stalin Prize Committee.

85. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 26–27 (April 9, 1942): “I had an interesting conversation with Seryozha about Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. In this opera musical numbers alternate with spoken scenes. In some theaters these scenes comprise *secco* recitative with sparse chordal accompaniment on the clavichord. The music of these scenes does not attract interest and does not even seem to be written by Mozart. Seryozha said that he had wanted for a long time to write music for these scenes in the style of (and using material belonging to) Mozart’s musical numbers. ‘My experience with the Classical Symphony gives me cause to hope for a successful outcome.’ Seryozha finds the libretto of *Don Giovanni* ramshackle: when it is staged, some numbers and (especially) recitatives are omitted. The opera would be even greater if musical numbers replaced the fast-paced conversations. For this reason he expressed a desire for me to look over the piano score of *Don Giovanni* and think about potential reductions.”
86. Prokofiev’s letters to Atovmyan during the war contain urgent requests for manuscript paper of different sizes. See, for example, “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 210–11.
87. On March 31, 1942, Mira records: “Seryozha was tortured all day yesterday with a headache. He couldn’t work. I read Aleksey Tolstoy’s tales ‘Incident on Basseyay Street’ [Sluchay na Basseyay ulitse, 1926], ‘The Viper’ [Gadyuka, 1928], ‘Frozen Night’ [Moroznaya noch’, 1928], and others aloud to him. The reading takes his thoughts away from the pain. He listens very attentively.” RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 25.
88. *Ibid.*, l. 23. The film opened in New York on March 23, 1939; the article, commissioned by VOKS, was intended for the re-release.
89. In his diary, Myaskovsky records: “May 28, 1942. The Prokofievs came by to say goodbye. Tomorrow they are leaving for Alma-Ata” (Lamm, *Stranitsi tvorcheskoy biografii Myaskovskogo*, 287). The trip was delayed; Prokofiev had planned to leave eleven days earlier. In a May 17 letter to Atovmyan, he stated: “Tomorrow I am relocating from Tbilisi to Alma-Ata to work on the film *Ivan the Terrible*. Address: Central Film Studio, me. Please write to me with what you’ve heard about *War and Peace*; that is, the impressions it made on those who heard it, the perspectives on staging it, and so on. Let me also know if the suite *The Year 1941* and the Quartet on Kabardino-Balkarian Themes are simply sitting on the shelf, or if something will be done with them. And more: did Shlifshteyn pass along to you my two songs about the Kabardino-Balkarian heroes of the war? I would really like 1) these songs to be sung, 2) to be published, and 3) for the SSK [Union of Soviet Composers] to pay me the honorarium for them. I have written two more songs, which I’ll send to you when the occasion arises.” “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 202–3.
90. Richard Pevear, “Preface” to Tolstoy, *What Is Art?* xi.
91. Bessarabia stems from “Basarab,” the name of the Romanian, or Wallachian dynastic clan that controlled part of the area in the fourteenth century. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Nonaggression Pact of 1939 gave Stalin a free hand over the entire region.
92. The other two anniversary films were *Leningraders* (*Leningradtsi*), directed by Sergey Gerasimov and Mikhail Kolotozov, and *Secretary of the District Committee* (*Sekretar’ raykoma*), directed by Ivan Piriyev.
93. E. Vishnevetskaya, “Kinomuzika S. S. Prokof’eva voyennikh let,” in *Iz proshlogo sovetskoy muzikal’noy kulturi*, vol. 1, ed. T. N. Livanova (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo “Sovetskiy kompozitor,” 1975), 49.
94. The extant pages of the score are in RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 105 and 106. The four items in yed. khr. 105—“Song” (Pesnya), “Gallop” (Skachka), “Revolution”

(Revolutsiya), and “Waltz” (Val’s)—exist in piano score in the composer’s hand; the three items in yed. khr. 106—“Intervention” (Interventsiya), “Kharitonov’s Death (incomplete)” (Smert’ Kharitonova [bez kontsa]), and “Germans before the Naked Attack” (Nemtsi pered goloy atakoy)—are orchestrated in another hand. Four items from the score are missing. Facsimile pages of much of the extant music from the film are provided in Vishnevetskaya, “Kinomuzika S. S. Prokof’eva voyennikh let,” 391–40; see pp. 47–56 for a substantive discussion of the music.

95. This latter song, which dates from 1863, is associated with both Polish and Russian worker causes.
96. Vishnevetskaya, “Kinomuzika S. S. Prokof’eva voyennikh let,” 54.
97. S. S. Prokof’ev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 461. The cantata, *Ballad of an Unknown Boy*, is discussed later in the chapter. Based almost exclusively on preexisting melodic material from his sketchbooks, the Flute Sonata, a peaceful Mozartian diversion from his brooding wartime projects, received its premiere in Moscow on December 7, 1943. Prokofiev received the contract for the score in Alma-Ata in September 1942, and completed it a year later in Perm. “The Flute Sonata is almost finished,” he wrote to Atovmyan on August 12, 1943. “The reprise of the finale remains to be written up. It ended up being quite substantial: four movements, nearly 40 pages, in a word worth all 8,000 rubles” (“Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 222). Prokofiev converted the Flute Sonata into his Second Violin Sonata on the suggestion of the violinist David Oistrakh (1908–74). It was premiered in Moscow on June 17, 1944.
98. The following information from M[i]ral’da] G[eyorgiyevna] Kozlova, “S. S. Prokof’ev pishet muziku k fil’mu,” *Muzikal’naya zhizn’* 16 (August 1983): 18–19.
99. I. Tyurin, “Pochemu zapazdivayet fil’m ‘Lermontov?’” *Kino (Moskva)*, June 13, 1941, p. 4.
100. For an example of the criticism see Mikh[ail] Levidov, “Lozhnaya kontsepsiya,” *Kino (Moskva)*, October 18, 1940, p. 3. Noting the pathos-ridden representation of the poet in the first draft of the script, Levidov complains: “A tale about a great man never incorporates that which ‘happened’ to him, what ‘was taking place’ around him, what others ‘were doing’ to him. It must first of all be a tale about what he did. For action is the dominant of each great man, and it is what leaves a mark in history.”
101. L. Barn, “Fil’m o Lermontove,” *Literatura i iskusstvo*, July 17, 1943, p. 2.
102. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 101.
103. The original version of the score (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 99) comprised a polonaise, a quadrille, three waltzes, a marching song, and an opera excerpt. Lamm orchestrated the polonaise, the “Mephisto” Waltz, and some additional background music associated with the “regime of Nikolay I” (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 100).
104. The song resurfaces in Prokofiev’s 1948 opera *A Story of a Real Man* (*Povest’ o nastoyashchem cheloveke*).
105. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 101, l. 2.
106. Konstantin Paustovskiy, “Poruchik Lermontov (Stseni iz zhizni Lermontova),” in *Sobraniye sochineniy*, ed. N. Kryuchkova, 6 vols. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1958), 6:23.
107. Kozlova, “S. S. Prokof’ev pishet muziku k fil’mu,” 18; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 61, l. 1.
108. Kozlova, “S. S. Prokof’ev pishet muziku k fil’mu,” 18.
109. *Ibid.*, 19 (letter of July 8, 1942).
110. *Ibid.*

111. Ibid.
112. Ibid (letter of August 26, 1942).
113. Ibid.
114. Vishnevetskaya, “Kinomuzika S. S. Prokof’yeva voyennikh let,” 63–64.
115. For a transcription of the folksong—“Oh you, Galya” (Oy ti, Galya)—and an extensive discussion of its use in the film, see *ibid.*, 58–63.
116. Facsimile pages of much of the extant music from the film are provided in *ibid.*, 402–8.
117. Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 181. The phrase “more alive than the living” comes from the 1924 Mayakovsky elegy “Vladimir Il’yich Lenin.” For context on the final point in this paragraph, see pp. 178–82.
118. RGALI f. 2372, op. 5, yed. khr. 7, l. 3.
119. *Ibid.*, l. 9.
120. *Ibid.*, l. 24.
121. *Ibid.*, l. 30.
122. *Ibid.*, l. 32.
123. This quotation and the information in the preceding and following sentences from Jerry T. Heil, *No List of Political Assets: The Collaboration of Iurii Olesha and Abram Room on ‘Strogii Iunosh’ (A Strict Youth [1936])* (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1989), 120–21.
124. The psychological content of Room’s films is the primary subject of “K 100-letiyu Abrama Rooma: ‘Kruglii stol’ v Muzee kino (fragmenti),” *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski* 25 (1994/95): 163–74.
125. Room’s 1927 film *Third Meshchanskaya Street*, for example, has been described “as one of the earliest feminist films.” Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 52–53.
126. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 40, l. 1.
127. It is also used in *A Story of a Real Man*, in the scene where the injured fighter pilot Aleksey Maresyev remembers his faraway sweetheart.
128. RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 161, l. 4.
129. I am grateful to Laura Hedden for her transcription and annotation of the melodic material in the score.
130. It bears noting, however, that the harmony, phrasing, and scoring of the illustrative music is richer than that of the song. For example, the melody of the third number, “The Park Path,” ascends through the upper registers of the orchestra, the E-flat major backdrop suffused by wayward D-flats and G-flats. Harps strum between measures 3 and 5, their tonal stasis answered between measures 8 and 10 by chromatic sequences in the strings and brasses. Prokofiev’s musical narrative matches the cause-and-effect motion of the visual narrative: the Germans are on the doorstep of the Soviet town, thus the halcyon ambience of “The Park Path” has to be dispelled.
131. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 102, l. 3. The text refers to Field Marshal Aleksandr Suvorov (1729–1800), an iconic figure in Russian history, reputed never to have lost a battle.
132. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 339, l. 8.
133. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, l. 13.
134. *Istoriya sovremennoy otechestvennoy muziki. Tom. 2 (1941–48)*, ed. M. E. Tarakanov (Moscow: Muzika, 1999), 453–55.
135. Denise J. Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914–2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 59.
136. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 522, l. 2.
137. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 184, l. 3 (letter of September 4, 1943).

138. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, l. 21.
139. “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 202. On June 10, 1943, Prokofiev sent Atovmyan a follow-up note: “I’ve almost finished the *Semyon Kotko* Suite. Since you asked in one of your letters what commission I’d like to receive from Muzfond, I’d be grateful if you sent me a contract for the suite. The deadline for completing it can be July 1 of this year. It’s turning out to be quite large, eight movements, almost 120 pages of scoring in small hand. This is so the contract won’t be too meager” (218–19).
140. Letter of November 1, 1942, reproduced in RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 47–48.
141. *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel’ Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel’ 1939-yanvar’ 1948*, 607.
142. Information from Pavel Antokol’skiy, *Stikhotvoreniya i poemi* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel’stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1958), 10.
143. “Khudozhnik i voyna,” 207.
144. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, 1. 4 (February 19 and 21, 1944, diary entries).
145. Shostakovich, “Sovetskaya muzika v dni voyni,” *Literatura i iskusstvo*, April 1, 1944, p. 2.
146. “Oni proshli po gryazi gruzno, za manekenom maneken.”
147. Medvedeva, “Istoriya prokof’evskogo avtografa, ili GURK v deystvii,” in *Sergey Prokof’ev: K 110-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya: Pis’ma, vospominaniya, stat’i*, ed. M. P. Rakhmanova (Moscow: Gosudarstvenniy tsentral’niy muzey muzikal’noy kul’tury imeni M. I. Glinki, 2001), 223–24; *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel’ Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel’ 1939-yanvar’ 1948*, 600–601.
148. Medvedeva, “Istoriya prokof’evskogo avtografa, ili GURK v deystvii,” 226–27.
149. Taruskin, “New Life for an Opera Hater’s Masterpiece as . . . an Opera,” *New York Times*, Arts & Leisure Section, September 9, 2001, pp. 63 and 68: “Tolstoy describes what would now be diagnosed as a case of tinnitus, a symptom of Andrey’s wound that causes him to hear ‘a soft, whispering voice repeating over and over again in a steady rhythm: ‘piti-piti-piti,’ and then ‘ti-ti,’ and again ‘piti-piti-piti,’ and ‘ti-ti.’”
150. The manuscript of the original piano score of *War and Peace* shows, in the form of pencil inserts, several of the changes made to it between 1943 and 1949. See RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 36.
151. Medvedeva, “Istoriya prokof’evskogo avtografa, ili GURK v deystvii,” 228 and 230.
152. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 46.
153. *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel’ Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel’ 1939-yanvar’ 1948*, 604.
154. *Ibid.*, 605. The epigraph would eventually be relocated from the start of the first half of the opera to the start of the second (scene 8 in the final version).
155. His travel plans changed. Prokofiev instead left Alma-Ata in late November, stopping en route to Moscow in Semipalatinsk to work on *Partisans in the Ukrainian Steppe*.
156. Collotyping, a printing technique invented in the nineteenth century, involves coating a glass plate with chromate gelatin and exposing it to light under a photographic negative of an image, creating a photographic positive.
157. Richter, *Notebooks and Conversations*, 79.
158. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 53.
159. Prokofiev did not compose the polonaise specifically for *Lermontov*. It came from his incidental music to the unrealized *Boris Godunov*, and it was later included in the score of *Ivan the Terrible* Part II. Arrangements of the famous “Mephisto” Waltz, an original

- contribution to the soundtrack, became part of the Three Pieces for Piano (1942) and Waltz Suite for Orchestra (1946).
160. "Pis'ma S. S. Prokof'yeva k P. A. Lammu," 295 n. 1.
 161. "Dokladnaya zapiska G. F. Aleksandrova o neudovletvoritel'nom rukovodstve khudozhestvennoy kinematografiyey Komitetom po delam kinematografii pri SNK SSSR," in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 675.
 162. RGALI f. 562, op. 1, yed. khr. 171, l. 3. Shklovsky's review is titled "Pages Torn from a Biography and Badly Read" (Listi, vırvanniye iz biografii i plokho prochtyonniye).
 163. Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 282–84.
 164. Atovm'yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 3, p. 19.
 165. Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 385.
 166. Atovm'yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 3, p. 19.
 167. On August 12, 1943, Prokofiev informed Atovmyan: "The question of my trip to Moscow remains uncertain in view of the fact that Eisenstein expects me in Alma-Ata at the end of September to finish the music for *Ivan the Terrible* Part I." "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 222–23.
 168. The organs of the government transferred to the Volga River city of Kuybishev (now Samara) beginning on October 15, 1941.
 169. Information in this paragraph from Medvedeva, "O 'gimnakh' Prokof'yeva," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: K 110-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya: Pis'ma, vospominaniya, stat'i*, 212; and from Laurel E. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 139.
 170. N. A. Sidorov, "'Gimn bol'shevikov pererastayet u nas v gosudarstvenniy': Dokumenti rossiyskikh arkhivov ob istorii sozdaniya Gosudarstvennogo gimna SSSR: 1943–1946 gg.," *Istoriya v dokumentakh. Rossiya XX vek* (2007). Available at <http://www.idf.ru/documents/info.jsp?p=20&set=66230>. Mikhalkov and El-Registan's letter is dated September 28, 1943.
 171. Medvedeva, "O 'gimnakh' Prokof'yeva," 212.
 172. Caroline Brooke, "Changing Identities: The Russian and Soviet National Anthems," *Slavonica* 13:1 (April 2007): 32.
 173. This second hymn, to words by Stepan Shchipachyov (1899–1980), is included in facsimile in Medvedeva, "O 'gimnakh' Prokof'yeva," 214–15.
 174. Prokofiev reported the proposal to Atovmyan in a September 16, 1943, letter: "The Kirov Theater has scheduled a staging of my ballet *The Buffoon*, and soon at that. Since I don't have the piano score here, and don't know where mine is, I implore you without haste to make a copy of it. It can be obtained from Nik[olay] Yak[ovlevich] Myaskovsky, or perhaps from Ye. V. Derzhanovskaya or the Conservatory library. The Kirov Theater will pay for the copy. Instruct the copyist to carefully write out the comments concerning the visual action, and likewise the indications for the instrumentation (fl., cl., and so forth). Second: To become familiar with the sound of *The Buffoon*, the theater wants to run through the suite in a closed rehearsal. Please send the orchestral score and parts to the theater's chairman, who will deliver them here and return them immediately after the run-through." "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 226.
 175. D[mitriy] R[omanovich] Rogal'-Levitskiy, "'Mimolyotniye svyazi': K 70-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya Sergeya Prokof'yeva," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: K 110-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya: Pis'ma, vospominaniya, stat'i*, 172.
 176. *Ibid.*, 188.
 177. Information in this paragraph from RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 60–61.

CHAPTER 5

1. See Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muziki: Stalinskaya kul'turnaya revolyutsiya 1936–1938*, 241–53.
2. “Pis'mo S. M. Eyzenshteyna B. Z. Shumyatskomu o svoey dal'neyshey rabote v kino,” in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 417.
3. “Dokladnaya zapiska B. Z. Shumyatskogo I. V. Stalinu o dal'neyshey rabote S. M. Eyzenshteyna,” in *ibid.*, 419.
4. “Postanovleniye TsK VKP(b),” in *ibid.*, 419–20.
5. “Dokladnaya zapiska zam. zav. Otdelom kul'turno-prosvetitel'noy raboti TsK VKP(b) A. I. Angarova I. V. Stalinu i A. A. Andreyevu s predlozheniyem poruchit' S. M. Eyzenshteynu postanovku novoy kinokartini,” in *ibid.*, 424.
6. *Ibid.*, 420 n. 2.
7. “Prilozheniye,” in *ibid.*, 425. In a July 6, 1938, letter, Vishnevsky praised *Alexander Nevsky* while expressing regret that he had been unable to collaborate with Eisenstein: “With just a touch of grief I thought about how things would have turned out if we had made *We, the Russian People* together.” Vs[evolod] Vishnevskiy, *Stat'i, dnevniki, pis'ma o literature i iskusstve* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1961), 523.
8. The practice of using long-past historical events to allegorize the present day did not end with Stalin. The 2007 film *1612*, directed by Vladimir Khotinenko, suggests parallels between the early seventeenth-century Time of Troubles and the late twentieth-century collapse of the Soviet Union. The film emphasizes the importance of strong Russian leadership and patriotism. The stable, prosperous reign of Tsar Mikhail Romanov is likened to Vladimir Putin's rule.
9. Merritt, “Recharging *Alexander Nevsky*: Tracking the Eisenstein–Prokofiev War Horse,” 36.
10. Sergei Eisenstein [Sergey Eyzenshteyn], “Alexander Nevsky and the Rout of the Germans” [Aleksandr Nevskiy i razгром nemtsev], in *The Eisenstein Reader*, ed. Richard Taylor (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 141.
11. *Ibid.*, 144.
12. P. Yevstaf'yev, “O stsennari 'Rus': Blizhe k istoricheskoy pravde,” *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 26, 1938, p. 6.
13. Eyzenshteyn, “Orvet tov. P. Yevstaf'yevu,” *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 26, 1938, p. 6.
14. Quoted in David Brandenberger, “The Popular Reception of S. M. Eisenstein's *Aleksandr Nevskii*,” in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, 235.
15. Eyzenshteyn, “Aleksandr Nevskiy [final rannego varianta literaturnogo stsennariya],” in *Izbranniye proizvedeniya*, ed. S. I. Yutkevich, 6 vols. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo “Iskusstvo,” 1964–71), 6:453–55.
16. Eyzenshteyn, *Memuari*, ed. N. I. Kleiman, 2 vols. (Moscow: Redaktsiya gazet “Trud”/Muzey kino, 1997), 2:289.
17. Maksimenkov, “Vvedeniye,” in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 11.
18. “Fil'm-kontsert ‘Aleksandr Nevskiy’ v Bol'shom teatre. Pervyye vpechatleniya. ‘Kruglii stol’ v Muzee kino,” *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski* 70 (2004): 12.
19. *Ibid.*, 12–13.
20. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, ll. 7–8.
21. Unsigned, “Fil'm o Ledovom poboishche,” *Pravda*, April 21, 1938, p. 6; unsigned, “Kinos'yomki ‘Ledovogo poboishcha,’” *Pravda*, July 8, 1938, p. 6.

22. Kevin Bartig notes that part of the overlong Battle on the Ice footage was made into a short for the “Battle Film Album” series. See his “Composing for the Red Screen: Sergei Prokofiev’s Film Music” (Ph. D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2008), 162.
23. Information in this paragraph provided by Naum Kleyman in a January 13, 2007, personal communication.
24. Eisenstein, “P–R–K–F–V,” in *Notes of a Film Director* (New York: Dover, 1970), 158.
25. *Ibid.*, 149.
26. “Moi noviye raboti,” in *Prokof’ev o Prokof’yeve: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 165.
27. Prokof’ev and Alpers, “Perepiska,” 431. Prokofiev sketched his Cello Concerto in E Minor during the summer of 1933 in Paris and completed it, after great delay, on September 18, 1938, in Nikolina Gora. It was premiered in Moscow on November 26, 1938, with Lev Berezovsky (1898–1960) as soloist, during the second *dekada* of Soviet music. Despite positive advance notice in *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, the three-movement score came in for stinging critique in *Sovetskaya muzika* for its diffuseness. Pyatigorsky, the cellist with whom Prokofiev conceived the Concerto, unveiled it in Boston on March 8, 1940, thereafter sending the composer a list of proposed changes. Like Berezovsky, he found the score unwieldy, and solicited and received (terse) permission from Prokofiev to adjust it.
28. *Ibid.*, 432.
29. B[oris] Vol’skiy, “Vospominaniya o S. S. Prokof’yeve,” in *S. S. Prokof’ev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 526–31.
30. See Merritt, “Recharging Alexander Nevsky: Tracking the Eisenstein–Prokofiev War Horse,” 44.
31. The scenario also provides a complete cast list, noteworthy for its folkloric doubling of character types: Aleksandr Yaroslavich Nevskiy, Novgorod Prince in conflict with Novgorodians living in Pereyaslav; Aleksandra Bryachislavovna, his wife; Gavriilo Oleksich and Vasilii Buslay, Novgorod warriors who participated in Aleksandr’s victory over the Swedes; Amelfa Timofeyevna, Buslay’s widowed mother; Vasilisa, maid of Pskov; Ol’ga, Novgorod maiden; Domash Tverdilovich, Novgorod boyar; a Novgorod merchant; Mikula, leader of the peasant militia; Pegusiy, a monk who participated in Aleksandr’s victory over the Swedes; Mikhalka, friend of Aleksandr; Ignat, Novgorod maker of chain armor; Savka, a princeling; Nikita, an old fisherman; Pavsha, an old Pskov commander; Tverdilo, Pskov traitor; Ananiy, Tverdilo’s monastic assistant; Avvakum, an old Pskov beggar; Graf German von Balk, master of the Teutonic Order; a Bishop; Brother Hubertus and Brother Dietlieb, Teutonic knights; a Black Monk; Khubilay, the Hun ambassador to Rus’. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 98, l. 6.
32. *Ibid.*, l. 5.
33. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 97 (cover sheet).
34. Prokofiev received an 8,000-ruble commission from the Committee on Arts Affairs for the Cantata, with the agreement stipulating completion in 1939 (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, ll. 16–17). “The music for the film *Alexander Nevsky* is the basis of the Cantata,” the composer explained. “All of the musical material was subject to fundamental reworking; the Cantata was significantly expanded by excerpts written for the film, but not included within it.” RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 21 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 29.
35. Vol’skiy, “Vospominaniya o S. S. Prokof’yeve,” 530.
36. Bartig, “Composing for the Red Screen: Sergei Prokofiev’s Film Music,” 146–50.
37. A. Postnikov, “Vsyo li blagopoluchno u poeta Lugovskogo? Pis’mo v redaktsiyu,” *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 26, 1937, p. 5; Valentin Katayev, “Vidokhi i vdokhi,” *Pravda*, November 5, 1938, p. 4.

38. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 22 (*Notograficheskii spravochnik*), l. 13.
39. On January 5, 1950, Lugovskoy sent the following note to Prokofiev: "Here are the outlines of my opus. For now it's been conditionally approved at Muzgiz. I simply dashed off the 8th stanza, which wouldn't otherwise come out" (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 599, l. 2).
40. Svyatoslav Prokof'yev, "O moikh roditelyakh: Beseda sina kompozitora (S. P.) s muzikovedom Nataliyey Savkinoy (N. S.)," in *Sergey Prokof'yev 1891–1991: Dnevnik, pis'ma besedi, vospominaniya*, 229.
41. In the sketches, "patres mei" (my fathers) substitutes for "pedes meos." See RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 97, l. 8.
42. "Muzika k 'Aleksandru Nevskomu,'" in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yev: Stat'i, interv'yū*, 168.
43. The source was first identified in print by Morag G. Kerr, "Prokofiev and His Cymbals," *Musical Times* 135 (October 1994): 608–9.
44. Movement 1, a setting of verses 13–14 of Psalm 39, includes the phrase "Quoniam advena sum apud te, et peregrinus" (For I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner); Movement 2, from verses 2–4 of Psalm 40, includes the phrases "*Expectans expectavi Dominum et intendit mihi*" (I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me) and "Et statuit super petram *pedes meos*" (And He set my feet on rock); Movement 3, from Psalm 150 in its entirety, includes the phrase "Laudate eum in *cymbalis* bene sonantibus" (Praise Him with the well-tuned cymbals).
45. The original title of his ballet *Le Pas d'Acier*, for example, was "Ursignol," a conflation of two abbreviations: "URSS"—the French for USSR—and "gnol" from the end of *rossignol*. The reference is to Stravinsky's opera *Le Rossignol*, which was produced by Diaghilev in 1914, as well as to Stravinsky's symphonic poem *Le Chant du Rossignol*, premiered in 1919 and staged as a ballet in 1925. "Ros" is also the first syllable of "Rossiya."
46. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 21 (*Notograficheskii spravochnik*), l. 29.
47. For a scene-by-scene taxonomy of the battle music, one that accords with Prokofiev's intentions as outlined in the sketches, see Michael Stegemann, "Klang. Geste. Raum. Prokofjews Filmmusik zu Sergej Eisensteins *Alexander Newski*," in *Bericht über das Internationale Symposium "Sergej Prokofjew—Aspekte seines Werkes und der Biographie."* Köln 1991, 349–61.
48. Philip D. Roberts, "Prokofiev's Score and Cantata for Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*," *Semiotica* 21: 1/2 (1977): 161.
49. Moreover, Nevsky rides a white horse, his Teutonic counterpart a black one.
50. Roberts, "Prokofiev's Score and Cantata for Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky*," 164–65.
51. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, trans. and ed. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975), 161.
52. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 239.
53. Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, 172–73.
54. See Brandenberger, "The Popular Reception of S. M. Eisenstein's *Aleksandr Nevskii*," 236–46.
55. Ibid., 238.
56. Ibid., 252 n. 59.
57. *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsdatel' Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel' 1939-yanvar' 1948*, 53.
58. See, for example, Joan Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); and Yuri Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: British Film Institute, 2002).
59. Eyzenshteyn, "Fil'm ob Ivane Groznom," *Izvestiya*, April 30, 1941, p. 3.

60. For the official account, see Brandenberger and Kevin M. F. Platt, "Terribly Pragmatic: Rewriting the History of Ivan IV's Reign, 1937–1956," in *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda*, 157–78.
61. Eyzenshteyn, "Fil'm ob Ivane Groznom."
62. Romm, *Besedi o kino*, 91.
63. Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible*, 31.
64. "And Tsar Ivan descends to the waves, casting a spell. And the sea is subdued. The waves slowly bow, lapping at the feet of the absolute ruler of the Russian lands." Eyzenshteyn, "Ivan Grozniy [kinostsenariy]," in *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya*, 6:418.
65. For the history, see L. M. Roshal', "'Ya uzhe ne mal'chik i na avantyuru ne poydu...': Perepiska S. M. Eyzenshteyna s kinematograficheskimi rukovodstvami po stsenariyu i fil'mu 'Ivan Grozniy,'" *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski* 38 (1998): 142–67.
66. "Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof'yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Stat'i i materialy*, 345. For an English-language translation of the bulk of their correspondence about the film, see *Selected Letters of Sergei Prokofiev*, 213–21.
67. Ibid. (letter of March 3, 1942).
68. Ibid., 346.
69. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 37.
70. Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible*, 14. Stalin offered his opinion on the scenario on September 13, 1943: "The scenario turned out not badly. Comrade Eisenstein coped with the task. Ivan the Terrible, as a progressive force for his time, and the *oprichnina*, as his effective instrument, came out not badly. The scenario, it follows, should be quickly realized." "Zapiska I. V. Stalina I. G. Bol'shakovu o stsenarii S. M. Eyzenshteyna 'Ivan Grozniy,'" in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenty*, 685.
71. The "extra one" was the sung text "Rejoice the Tsar Is Crowned" for the Uspensky Cathedral coronation scene.
72. V[ladimir] Zabrodin, "S. M. Eyzenshteyn: Iz arkhiva," *Kinograf* 8 (2000): 134.
73. Versions of the song are included in Aleksandr Ostrovsky's play *The Snow Maiden* (*Snegurochka*, 1873) and Rimsky-Korsakov's 1881 opera of the same name.
74. Tatiana K. Egorova, *Soviet Film Music: An Historical Survey*, trans. Tatiana A. Ganf and Natalia A. Egunova (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997), 106.
75. Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 256.
76. Information in this and the following paragraphs from the English-language translation of the thematic plan in Prokof'yev, *Muzika k fil'mu Sergeya Eyzenshteyna Ivan Grozniy. Soch. 116. Partitura. Avtorskiy tekst* (Moscow and Hamburg: Glinka State Central Museum of Musical Culture/Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, 1997), 28–29. Henceforth, this source is listed as the Sikorski Edition.
77. Leonid Kozlov, "'Ivan Grozniy.' Muzikal'no-tematicheskoye stroeniye," in *Proizvedeniye vo vremeni: Stat'i, issledovaniya, besedi* (Moscow: Eyzenshteynovskiy tsentr issledovaniy kinokul'tury, 2005), 45.
78. Ibid., 36–44.
79. "Zapiska I. G. Bol'shakova A. S. Shcherbakovu o pros'be S. M. Eyzenshteyna utverdit' na rol' Yefrosin'i v fil'me 'Ivan Grozniy' 'imeyushchuyu semitskiye cherti' aktrisu F. G. Ranevskuyu. 24 oktyabrya 1942 g.," in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenty*, 646. See also Kozlov, "Yeshcho o 'kazuse Ranevskoy,'" in *Kinovedcheskiye zapiski* 38 (1998): 168–72. Bolshakov replaced Dukelsky as chairman of the Committee on Cinema Affairs on June 3, 1939.

80. Information in this paragraph from Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible*, 17–19.
81. The Sikorski Edition offers the detail, from Mira's memoirs, that, on September 6, 1944, a priest was present at the Mosfilm studios for the recording of the liturgical music in the coronation scene. On September 12, Prokofiev and Eisenstein went to the Bolshoy Theater to listen to the bells that had been deposited there following their government-ordered confiscation from Moscow churches (30–31 n. 4).
82. See *Bol'shaya tsenzura: Pisateli i zhurnalisti v Strane Sovetov. 1917–1956*, 541–42. Preparation for the rehabilitation of the Orthodox Church (which included the granting of permission for the election of the Patriarch, something that had not occurred since the time of Peter the Great) began as early as mid-1940, so when Eisenstein received the commission to make *Ivan the Terrible* in 1941, he could already count on including religious music in it.
83. The following list of the contents of the piano score comes from RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 108–9; and the Sikorski Edition, 234–35:

Part I: Overture (1944); Ocean–Sea [given twice in the score, first in pen without instrumental indications, then in pencil with instrumental indications] (1943); Shuysky and the Huntsmen; The Entrance of Ivan; Mnogolietiye [“Many Years,” a celebratory greeting]; Young Ivan's March; Swan [a choral round dance, or *khorovod*, that Prokofiev would reuse in his ballet *The Tale of the Stone Flower*]; Song of Praise; Riot; Holy Fool; Tatars; Entrance of the Tatars; Ivan's Tent; Attack; Cannoneers; Cannons Move to Kazan; Kazan Is Taken; Malyuta's Jealousy; Ivan Entreats the Boyars; Poisoning; Anastasiya's Illness; Ivan at the Coffin; The Oath of the *Oprichniki* [on poorly preserved paper] (November 18, 1942); Return!; *Part II: The Furnace Play*; The Song of the Beaver; Dances of the *Oprichniki*: 1) Chaotic Dance; 2) Orderly Dance (1945); *Oprichniki* Verses; The *Oprichniki* and Vladimir: Chorus No. 1 (hummed a cappella); Chorus No. 2 (hummed) [with the instruction “the 2nd basses on a separate microphone,” doubtless to strengthen the bottom register, which includes a low C].

84. Sikorski Edition, 232–33. The numbers are “The Death of Glinskaya,” a portion of the film's original prologue depicting the poisoning of Ivan's mother by the boyars; and “Wondrous is God” (Conversation of the Ambassadors), Prokofiev's rearrangement of the ending of the sacred concerto *May God Arise* (*Da voskresnet Bog*) by Dmitriy Bortnyansky (1751–1825). The Glinka Museum editors posit that Prokofiev intended this number for Part II of the film (the liturgical drama “The Fiery Furnace”), but the film itself features Bortnyansky's original work. The phrase “Conversation of the Ambassadors,” moreover, indicates that the number was intended for the Part I coronation scene, not the Part II liturgical drama. During the coronation scene, the ill-willed Livonian ambassador to Moscow tries to sow foment by asking Prince Andrey Kurbsky why he, rather than the young Ivan, did not become tsar.
85. “Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof'yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna,” 347; the italicized words were written in English.
86. In a June 19, 1942, letter to Prokofiev, Shlifshteyn writes: “You are planning to begin work with Eisenstein on the film *Ivan the Terrible*. Is it not the case that by embarking on Terrible you are hindering the now-realized Kutuzov? My advice is to finish *War and Peace* before taking on *Ivan the Terrible*.” Quoted in RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 40.

87. "Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof'yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna," 348. "The Furnace Play" serves a symbolic function in *Ivan the Terrible* Part II. The Metropolitan of Moscow stages the drama in an effort to force Ivan into submitting to the authority of the Church. It recounts the tale, from the Old Testament Book of Daniel, of the three boys—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—who are put in a furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar during his persecution of Jews in Babylon. In defiance of the King, the lads praise God. Following the performance, a small child points to Ivan and declares that he resembles the evil King.
88. Sikorski Edition, 229.
89. *Ibid.*, 165–66. The various other problems with the sacred music in the edition are expertly discussed by Katya Ermolaev Ossorgin in her paper "Liturgical Borrowings as Film Music in Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*," American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies National Convention, Washington, D.C., November 19, 2006.
90. "Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof'yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna," 349.
91. *Ibid.*, 350. So much time had passed that the original 40,000-ruble contract for *Ivan the Terrible*, signed on November 12, 1942, in Alma-Ata, had expired. Prokofiev signed another contract on September 14, 1944, in Moscow (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, ll. 16 and 18–19).
92. Unimpressively, the extant recording reveals.
93. Sikorski Edition, 29; translation slightly adjusted.
94. "Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof'yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna," 350.
95. Kozlov, "Ten' Groznogo i khudozhnik," 70; Vishnevskiy, "Fil'm 'Ivan Grozniy,'" *Prauda*, January 28, 1945, p. 3.
96. Lamm, *Stranitsi tvorcheskoy biografii Myaskovskogo*, 310 (January 10, 1945, diary entry).
97. *Ibid.*
98. "Iz perepiski S. S. Prokof'yeva i S. M. Eyzenshteyna," 351.
99. *Ibid.*, 352.
100. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 98.
101. Eisenstein, "From Lectures on Music and Color in *Ivan the Terrible*," in *The Eisenstein Reader*, 170.
102. Vol'skiy, "Vospominaniya o S. S. Prokof'yeva," 536.
103. Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible*, 22–23.
104. "Postanovleniye Sekretariata TsK VKP(b) o vtoroy serii fil'ma 'Ivan Grozniy,'" in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 723.
105. "Stalin, Molotov and Zhdanov on *Ivan the Terrible* Part Two," in *The Eisenstein Reader*, 162. The transcript is by Eisenstein and Cherkasov.
106. Thus on November 22, 1952, toward the end of his life, Stalin approved the filming of new versions of the exploits of Alexander Nevsky and *Ivan the Terrible*, to be directed by Aleksandr Ivanov (1898–1984) and Ivan Piryev (1901–68), respectively. Scheduled for production in 1953, these films went unrealized. "Proyekt postanovleniya Byuro Prezidiuma TsK KPSS ob utverzhdenii spiska khudozhestvennikh kinofil'mov dlya proizvodstva v 1953 g.," in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 904.

CHAPTER 6

1. "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 223.
2. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 92.

3. In a letter dated June 29, 1950, Atovmyan reminds Prokofiev that he needs a document facilitating his use of the room: “I asked Mira Aleksandrovna to copy the letter about the room on Mozhayka (with its transfer on the instruction of the Arts Committee). It’s very important that this be done, especially for the publishing business” (“Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 251).
4. Elizabeth Wilson, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 221.
5. RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 161, l. 6.
6. Prokofiev to Boris Radin, an employee of the Union of Soviet Composers, letter of June 8, 1944, RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 176, l. 31.
7. On September 18, 1944, Prokofiev wrote to Lamm about *Ivan the Terrible* on the Mozhay-skoye Shosse stationery, but provided the Hotel Moscow as his address (“Pis’mo S. S. Prokof’yeva k P. A. Lammu,” 309).
8. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 87.
9. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 282, ll. 1–2. The two letters, the first an overview of the activities of the Ivanovo composers, the second focused on the Fifth Symphony, are dated August 27, 1944.
10. *Prokof’ev o Prokof’yeve: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 209.
11. Ibid.; “[O moikh rabotakh za godi voyni],” in S. S. *Prokof’ev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 252.
12. Unsigned, “Composer, Soviet-Style,” *Time*, November 19, 1945, p. 57.
13. “Vistupleniye na zasedanii plenuma Soyuzo kompozitorov SSSR,” in *Prokof’ev o Prokof’yeve: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 202.
14. See, for example, RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 290 (Sketchbook No. 10), ll. 2, 8ob., and 16; and f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 291 (Sketchbook No. 11), ll. 7 and 8. This latter source is remarkably informative, since it contains sketches for his Fifth Symphony, Sixth Symphony, and revisions of his Second and Fourth Symphonies. On l. 23, Prokofiev identifies a theme as “6-ya simf., II ch., 3-ya tem” (6th Symphony, movement 2, 3rd theme); on ll. 27 and 29 he wrote “dlya 2-oy simf” (for the 2nd Symphony) and “IV smf. III ch.” (4th Symphony, movement 3) above reworked melodic material. Prokofiev did not complete the revision of the Second Symphony; the revision of the Fourth Symphony dates from 1947.
15. William W. Austin, “Prokofiev’s Fifth Symphony,” *Music Review* 17:3 (August 1956): 220.
16. Prokofiev, who remained in intermittent contact with Koussevitzky throughout the war, sent a grateful telegram in English to the conductor on November 6, 1945, three days before the American premiere (RGALI f. 1929, op. 5, yed. khr. 9, l. 45). Like the Soviet media, the American media interpreted the work in bellicose emotional terms. Noel Straus’s review is characteristic: “Here Prokofieff comes to grips with humanity in its tremendous struggle, and does so with telling sympathy in music of extraordinary vitality. Not suffering and sorrow dominate the work, however, but the sense of power felt by his race and the overwhelming joy experienced in its realization of certain victory over its foes and the forces of evil.” “Prokofieff Fifth in Premiere Here; Composer’s New Symphony Is Presented by Koussevitzky and Boston Orchestra,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1945, p. 24.
17. Richter, *Notebooks and Conversations*, 89.
18. Oleg Prokofiev, interview with MB, July 18, 1968.
19. Dm[i]riy Kabalevskiy, “O Sergeye Prokof’yeve,” in S. S. *Prokof’ev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 420.

20. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 265, ll. 5–6.
21. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 4.
22. V[ladimir] A[leksandrovich] Vlasov, “Vstrechi s S. S. Prokof’evim,” in S. S. *Prokof’ev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 430.
23. RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 161, l. 11.
24. Brown, “Prokofiev’s *War and Peace*: A Chronicle,” 310.
25. An overture on Johnson’s behalf came from Ephraim Gottlieb, Prokofiev’s de facto representative in the United States. On May 2, 1943, Gottlieb wrote the following to Maksim Litvinov, then the Soviet ambassador in Washington: “In a recent conversation we had in Chicago, Mr. Edward Johnson, Director of the Metropolitan Opera Association, expressed great interest in Serge Prokofieff’s new opera ‘War and Peace.’ He felt that a production of the opera in New York next season would be a valuable means of further cementing cultural relations between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and he asked me to cable Mr. Prokofieff, who has been a close friend for many years, asking him to send a score of his opera.” AVP RF f. 192, op. 10, papka 73, d. 50, l. 4.
 Also on May 2, Prokofiev dispatched a telegram to Khrapchenko from Alma-Ata, reporting: “The American Metropolitan Theater telegraphs its immediate intention to produce *War and Peace*. Please advise.” Khrapchenko replied on May 7: “I would advise you to respond to the Metropolitan Theater to the effect that a production of the opera *War and Peace* ought to occur there after a production on the Soviet stage. Let me take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate you on the awarding of a Stalin Prize [for the Seventh Piano Sonata].” Prokofiev responded to Khrapchenko on May 10, but not about the opera: “My heartfelt gratitude to you for the congratulations.” *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel’ Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel’ 1939–yanvar’ 1948*, 605–6.
26. Prokofiev made this remark in a July 6, 1943, letter to Grigoriy Shneyerson, then the head of the musical division of VOKS (“Vstrechi s Prokof’evim,” 267). VOKS engaged in tentative discussions with the Metropolitan Opera, and even accommodated Prokofiev’s request to have the libretto of *War and Peace* translated into English, but the effort was moot. Prokofiev, for his part, rejected the translation as “imprecise and superficial” (271). Shneyerson empathized with Prokofiev concerning the absence of activity at the Bolshoy Theater: “Unfortunately, your suggestion about the B. Theater is close to the truth,” he acknowledged on July 22, 1943. “I had a special conversation on this subject with Shlifshiteyn and he said to me that work on staging *War and Peace* is obviously dragging” (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 750, l. 3).
27. Shneyerson to Prokofiev, letter of August 16, 1943, RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 750, l. 4.
28. The reasons for the dismissal are outlined in a June 10, 1943, letter from Khrapchenko to Stalin and Molotov (RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 951, ll. 79–80). Khrapchenko cites poor organization, slow preparation of new productions, and a loss of discipline among the Bolshoy Theater artists and staff. “The Committee on Arts Affairs,” he reports, “has repeatedly pointed out to S. A. Samosud the serious deficiencies of his work. Despite formally accepting the criticism and instructions of the Committee, S. A. Samosud has not, in effect, taken any serious measures toward improving the work of the Bolshoy Theater.” In conclusion, Khrapchenko recommended reappointing Samosud to a smaller Moscow, Leningrad, or Sverdlovsk theater. Samosud resurfaced after his dismissal as the artistic director of the Stanislavsky Theater.

29. Atovmyan had published the vocal score in collotype in the spring and summer of 1943 in anticipation of a Bolshoy Theater staging; revisions to the end of scene 11, errors on the proofs, and logistical problems related to Prokofiev's wartime relocations slowed the publication process. Prokofiev's April 24, 1943, letter to Atovmyan (sent from Alma-Ata to Moscow) is illustrative: "How annoying that the piano score of *War and Peace* has to be copied anew. Work on the opera at the Bolshoy Theater must be delayed. Did you receive the piano score of the end of scene 11?" ("Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 217). Samosud's dismissal from the Bolshoy Theater resulted in the cancellation of the planned staging.
30. Letter of July 12, 1945, in Mariya Yudina, *Visokiy stoykiy dukh. Peregiska 1918–1945 gg.*, ed. A. M. Kuznetsov (Moscow: Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2006), 499.
31. *Ibid.*, 499–500. For a listing of the Prokofiev works in Yudina's repertoire, see pp. 597–98. Her esteem for Prokofiev can be gleaned from the forty-six letters and telegrams she sent to him from 1938 to 1952.
32. Georgiy Polyanovskiy, "'Voyna i mir.' Novaya opera S. Prokof'yeva," *Vechernyaya Moskva*, July 3, 1945, p. 3.
33. M[jira] A[bramovna] Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yevе. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. Stat'i*, 28–29.
34. Taruskin, "War and Peace," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, 4:1102.
35. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yevе. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 18; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 104.
36. Brown, "Prokofiev's *War and Peace*: A Chronicle," 313.
37. Yelena Krivtsova, "Prokof'yev i Shostakovich: 'memuarnoye prikosnoveniye,'" in *Shostakovich—Urtext*, ed. M. P. Rakhmanova (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Deka-VS," 2006), 122.
38. These are scored for tenor and baritone with piano accompaniment. The first of them, "How delightful the Moscow road," is heard in *A Story of a Real Man*.
39. RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 161, l. 9. The letter is undated.
40. Ulanova, "The Author of My Favorite Ballets," 237–38.
41. Slonimskiy, "Vstrechi s Prokof'yevim," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevе: Stat'i, interv'y*, 191.
42. TsGALI SPb f. 337, op. 1, d. 200, l. 3.
43. "Obrucheniye v monastire," 189.
44. The film was recommended for production by Bolshakov, the chairman of the Committee on Cinema Affairs, in an August 7, 1939, report to Molotov. See *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 550–61, esp. 559.
45. N[ikolay] D. Volkhov, *Teatral'niye vechera* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Iskusstvo," 1966), 397.
46. Volkhov, "Skazka dlya baleta," *Za sovetskoye iskusstvo*, April 12, 1946, p. 4.
47. TsGALI SPb f. 337, op. 1, d. 200, ll. 8 and 11.
48. RNB f. 617, op. 1, yed. khr. 11, l. 2.
49. *Ibid.*, l. 30b.
50. "Zolushka," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yevе: Stat'i, interv'y*, 192.
51. Volkhov, *Teatral'niye vechera*, 398.
52. TsGALI SPb f. 337, op. 1, d. 200, l. 21.
53. On February 11, 1943, Radin summoned Chabukiani to Perm from Tbilisi (TsGALI SPb f. 337, op. 1, d. 200, l. 33). The choreographer had fallen ill, however, and decided that he needed to stay in the warm Tbilisi climate in order to recover, which forced Radin to enlist another choreographer.

54. Sherman, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Sergeyeviche Prokof'yeve," 59–60.
55. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 68.
56. V. Prokhorova, *Konstantin Sergeyev* (Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1974), 84–85.
57. "Vistupleniye po Moskovskomu radio," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 200.
58. "O 'Zolushke,'" in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeve: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 211–12.
59. Prokofiev specifically recycled—with enriched harmonies—a portion of No. 41 of *Eugene Onegin*, "The Meeting of Onegin and Tatyana in St. Petersburg."
60. Volkhov, *Teatral'niye vechera*, 399.
61. Ibid.
62. RGALI f. 962 op. 3, yed. khr. 1391, ll. 3 and 5.
63. Pantiyelev, "Prokof'yev: razmishleniya, svidetel'stva, spori. Beseda s Gennadiyem Rozhdestvenskim," 16.
64. Ibid. Fayer first approached Rogal-Levitsky to undertake the reorchestration, but the latter refused, emphasizing his unwillingness to jeopardize his relationship with Prokofiev ("Mimolyotniye svyazi": K 70-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya Sergeya Prokof'yeva," 196–99).
65. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 27 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 28ob.
66. RNB f. 617, op. 1, yed. khr. 11, l. 7.
67. Ibid.
68. B. L'vov-Anokhin, *Galina Ulanova* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1984), 148.
69. B. Valerianov [V. Bogdanov-Berezovskiy], "'Zolushka' na leningradskoy akademicheskoy stsene," *Trud (Moskva)*, April 12, 1946, p. 4.
70. Letter of March 17, 1946, quoted in Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 93–94.
71. Shostakovich, "Zolushka," *Pravda*, November 29, 1945, p. 2.
72. Arlene Croce, "The Search for *Cinderella*," in *Writing in the Dark, Dancing in the New Yorker* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 481.
73. Ibid., 482.
74. Sem. Rosenfel'd, "'Zolushka.' Prem'yera novogo baleta v Teatre imeni S. M. Kirova," *Smena*, April 18, 1946, p. 4; A. Vaganova, "'Zolushka.' Prem'yera v Teatre operi i baleta imeni S. M. Kirova," *Leningradskaya pravda*, April 14, 1946, p. 3.
75. RNB f. 617, op. 1, yed. khr. 12, l. 15.
76. Quoted in Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 16.
77. T[amara] Tsitovich, "Zolushka. Balet Prokof'yeva," *Sovetskaya muzika* 8–9 (1946): 50.
78. The First and Second Suites were published in 1976 and 1977, the Third Suite in 1954.
79. Prokofiev was not, however, registered as a tenant of the apartment until November 15, 1947.
80. His previous car, the blue Ford, was confiscated during the war (Chemberdzhii, *XX vek Lini Prokof'yevoy*, 214).
81. The Committee on Arts Affairs authorization for the trip (*komandirovochnoye udostovereniye*) is preserved in RGAE f. 168, op. 1, d. 176, l. 14.
82. S[amuil] Samosud, "Vstrechi s Prokof'yevim," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Stat'i i materialy*, 147–48.
83. Brown, "Prokofiev's *War and Peace*: A Chronicle," 314.
84. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 123, l. 6.
85. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 33.

86. Corwin worked for CBS Radio, whose administration had been in contact with Prokofiev during the war, approaching him, in a letter dated May 7, 1943, about composing a fifteen-minute orchestral work for broadcast in the fall of 1944. Prokofiev expressed his willingness to take on the task, but it went unrealized (GARF f. 5283, op. 14, yed. khr. 176, l. 14; f. 5283, op. 14, yed. khr. 124, l. 52).
87. Shneyerson, “Vstrechi s Prokof’evim,” 274.
88. Quoted in Lee Bland to MB, letter of July 18, 1975.
89. For his efforts on behalf of international cultural and political relations, Corwin was black-listed by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Un-American Activities.
90. According to Kozlova (“Poslesloviye,” in Prokof’ev, *Autobiografiya* [Moscow: Izdatel’skiy dom “Klassika-XXI,” 2007], 434–36), the composer first began work on an autobiography on June 1, 1937, finishing forty-seven chapters of the “childhood” section—his birth up to 1904—on October 17, 1939 (notebook 1). In 1941, Kabalevsky, then the general editor of *Sovetskaya muzika*, solicited an autobiographical essay from him in recognition of his fiftieth birthday. Prokofiev responded with a “short” autobiography comprising three chapters: “Youth” (Yuniye godi), “After the Conservatory” (Po okonchanii konservatorii), and “Years spent abroad and after returning to the motherland” (Godi prebivaniya za granitsey i posle vozvrashcheniya na rodinu). The first and second chapters were published by *Sovetskaya muzika* in 1941 and 1946, respectively; the entire essay appeared in 1956 in the first edition of S. S. Prokof’ev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*. In 1945, following his hospitalization and convalescence, Prokofiev resumed writing his “long” autobiography. At the time of his death, he had completed eight notebooks with an elaborate, entertainingly written chronicle of his conservatory experiences up to July 6, 1909. The dates of these notebooks, which are in Mira’s hand with Prokofiev’s annotations (he dictated them to her and then corrected them), accord with periods of stability in his personal and professional life: May 10, 1945, to July 23, 1945 (notebook 2); July 23, 1945, to September 18, 1945 (notebook 3); September 19, 1945, to July 21, 1946 (notebook 4); July 23, 1946, to [?] and [?] to June 7, 1949 (notebook 5); June 10, 1949, to November 16, 1949 (notebook 6); November 16, 1949, to June 19, 1950 (notebook 7); June 19, 1950, to August 26, 1950 (notebook 8); and August 28, 1950, to [?] (notebook 9). During 1948, a period of crisis, he suspended work on his autobiography altogether.
91. The letter, to Mariya Belkina, is included in Natal’ya Gromova, *Vse v chuzhoye glyadyat okno* (Moscow: Kolleksiya “Sovershenno sekretno,” 2002), 177.
92. Mira’s notes from the essay, by Mukhtar Auezov and Leonid Sobolev, are included with the typescript of the libretto (RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 23, l. 50).
93. Sabinina, “Ob opere, kotoraya ne bila napisana,” *Sovetskaya muzika* 8 (1962): 43.
94. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 23, l. 48ob.
95. Information in this paragraph from Sabinina, “Ob opere, kotoraya ne bila napisana,” 44–48.
96. Prokofiev clarifies that he broke up the libretto “into separate moments, like shots in a film, selecting for each shot the musical material that seemed suited to it.” *Prokof’ev o Prokof’eye: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 214–15.
97. It specified 20,000 rubles for the music, 8,000 rubles for the libretto (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, ll. 22–23).
98. *Prokof’ev o Prokof’eye: Stat’i, interv’yu*, 215 n.8.
99. S. S. Prokof’ev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 471.

100. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 24 (*Notograficheskiy spravochnik*), l. 40; see also D[avid] Oysttrakh, "O dorogom i nezabvennom (iz vospominaniy o S. S. Prokof'yev)," in *S. S. Prokof'yev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 453.
101. Oysttrakh, "O dorogom i nezabvennom (iz vospominaniy o S. S. Prokof'yev)," 452.
102. Prokofiev received a First Class Stalin Prize for the Violin Sonata. The award was announced in the June 7, 1947, issue of *Pravda* and the June 13, 1947, issue of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, and discussed in an article titled "The Pride of Soviet Music": "The spirit of contemporary life also envelops works of so-called pure instrumental music. S. Prokofiev's Sonata for Violin and Piano is an outstanding achievement of splendid, glorious Russian craftsmanship as well as an outstanding contribution to Soviet chamber music. Prokofiev's penchant for bold innovation and his constant search for new musical elements harmonically merge in the Sonata with the Russian classical music traditions." A. Samoylov, "Gordost' sovetskoy muziki," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, June 13, 1947, p. 3.
103. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 43.
104. Nest'yev, "Proizvedeniya Sergeya Prokof'yeva," *Pravda*, November 21, 1946, p. 4.
105. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 45.
106. *Ibid.*, 87.
107. Letter of November 10, quoted in *ibid.*
108. "Postanovleniye Orgbyuro TsK VKP(b) o zhurnalakh 'Zvezda' i 'Leningrad'" and "Postanovleniye Orgbyuro TsK VKP(b) 'O repertuare dramaticheskikh teatrov i merakh po yego uluchsheniyu,'" in *Vlast' i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenti TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VChK-OGPU-NKVD, o kul'turnoy politike. 1917–1953 gg.*, 587–96.
109. Information and quotations in this paragraph from Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 88–90.
110. Samosud, "Vstrechi s Prokof'yevim," 154–58; Brown, "Prokofiev's *War and Peace*: A Chronicle," 314–17. It merits noting that Prokofiev signed a contract for the "war council" scene of Part II at the same time as the "ball" scene of Part I—on September 19, 1945. The 40,000-ruble agreement with Malegot specified a January 1, 1946, deadline for the "war council" scene and a September 25, 1945, deadline for the "ball" scene (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, l. 28).
111. Prokof'yev and Alpers, "Perepiska," 434. In the same letter, from February 22, 1947, Prokofiev pressed Alpers for her opinion of the Kirov Theater staging of *The Duenna*.
112. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 67.
113. The score of *Romeo and Juliet*, like that of *Cinderella*, continued to be manipulated without Prokofiev's permission. Rozhdstvensky recalls that, for the Bolshoy staging, "a 'Mantua' scene, which is not in the piano score, was written, and all of the graceful folk dances (in 6/8) became thunderous—because a mass of people, the entire corps de ballet, was dancing." Rozhdstvensky adds that "Aleksandr Davidovich Tseytlin, the pianist concertmaster of the ballet, created 'Mantua.'" Pantiyelev, "Prokof'yev: razmishleniya, svidetel'stva, spori. Beseda s Gennadiyem Rozhdstvenskim," 16.
114. "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 215.
115. Prokofiev received notice of the award while he was in Perm—he was unable to attend the August 10, 1943, award ceremony at the Kremlin. Atovmyan gushed about it in an August 4 letter: "The [July 27] resolution concerning your award was welcomed by everyone with great joy. I'm not exaggerating—it was a festive occasion (with much drinking),

- no less so than the resolution of April 23, 1932 (on the liquidation of RAPM).” “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 221.
116. Information from a biographical questionnaire completed by Prokofiev on January 20, 1953, for the second edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (*Bol'shaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya*) (RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 99, l. 3).
117. “Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 216.
118. GARF f. 5283, op. 21, yed. khr. 74, l. 68. Prokofiev was also, according to this source, vice president of the Musical Sector of VOKS and a member of the Orgkomitet of the Union of Soviet Composers. The two Prokofiev societies were located in Hanover, New Hampshire (Dartmouth College), and Wheaton, Illinois (Wheaton College). Prokofiev corresponded with the former between 1937 and 1939.
119. RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 571, l. 62. The memorandum, from VOKS Chairman Vladimir Kemenov (1908–88) to Georgiy Aleksandrov (1908–61), reads: “I am sending a draft TASS report about the selection of composer S. Prokofiev as an honorary member of the Swedish Musical Academy. Comrade A. Ya. Vishinsky approves this draft, so long as there are no objections from the Propaganda and Agitation Department.” The August 1, 1947, inscription on the memorandum, in the hand of Polikarp Lebedev, reads: “For the archive. Kemenov is notified that this information can be published in the newspaper *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*.” The draft TASS report consists of a single sentence: “Composer Sergey Prokofiev, Stalin Prize laureate, has been named a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music” (RGASPI f. 17, op. 125, d. 571, l. 63).
120. For an exemplary discussion of the similarities and dissimilarities between the ballet, the simultaneously composed Fourth Symphony, and the 1947 revision of the Symphony, along with a consideration of the politics behind the revision, see Marina Frolova-Walker, “Between Two Aesthetics: The Revision of Pilnyak’s *Mahogany* and Prokofiev’s Fourth Symphony,” in *Sergey Prokofiev and His World*, 452–92.
121. Brown, “The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev” (Ph. D. diss., Florida State University, 1967), 322. Additional information in this paragraph from pp. 292–93.
122. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 58 (June 16, 1947).
123. Rita McAllister, “Prokofiev” (unpublished typescript, 1984), 187–88.
124. Rifkin, “Tonal Coherence in Prokofiev’s Music: A Study of the Interrelationships of Structure, Motives, and Design,” 130.
125. Richter, *Notebooks and Conversations*, 83–84.
126. *Ibid.*, 87.
127. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 163.
128. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 62.
129. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 85.
130. “Stalin leads us forward, / The people follow behind their leader. / We travel Lenin’s path, / We follow behind our party, / We sing the glory of the party” (Stalin nas vediot vperyod, / Za vozhdem idyot narod. / Idyom mi Leninskim putyom, / Za nashey partiyey idyom, / Mi slavu partii poyom).
131. Brown, “The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev,” 442–43.
132. Mendel’son-Prokof’eva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 69 and 73.
133. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 122. These dates call into question the veracity of an anecdote from Shneyerson (as related to the musicologist Daniil Zhitomirsky) regarding

Prokofiev's "first meeting" with Shostakovich in Ivanovo in the summer of 1945. According to the anecdote, Prokofiev eagerly reported to the disinterested, tight-lipped Shostakovich that he had written—rather than just begun to sketch—the first movement of the Sixth Symphony and had begun working on the second. Shostakovich responded to Prokofiev's detailed description of the first movement form with the question: "So, is the weather always like this here?" Daniil Zhitomirskiy, "Shostakovich," *Muzikal'naya akademiya* 3 (1993): 26–27; Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 482.

134. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 50.
135. *Ibid.*, 77.
136. Nest'yev, "Shestaya simfoniya S. Prokof'yeva," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, October 18, 1947, p. 4.
137. Besides publishing in *Pravda*, *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, and *Sovetskaya muzika*, Nestyev served from 1945 to 1948 as chief editor for the music division of the Radio Committee; before that he taught at the College for Military Choir Directors (Visshee uchilishche voyennikh kapel'meysterov) of the Military Faculty of the Moscow Conservatory. The turnaround in his relationship with Prokofiev centered on the publication in the United States of his monograph *Sergey Prokofiev: His Musical Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), an elaboration of information in his dissertation "Tvorcheskii put' S. S. Prokof'yeva," which he defended on June 1, 1945. In the midst of the anti-Formalism, anti-cosmopolitanism campaign of 1949, Nestyev was attacked by the Committee on Arts Affairs as a Prokofiev "apologist" whose writings were replete with "formalist mistakes." The "anti-patriotic fact—about which comrade Nestyev himself reported—of the publication of his book about Prokofiev in America before it came out in the Soviet Union demands even sterner renunciation" (unsigned, "Protiv kosmopolitizma i formalizma v muzikal'noy teorii i kritike," *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, February 26, 1949, p. 3). To rescue his career, Nestyev changed course; his later writings on Prokofiev betray his earlier ones, prompting the composer to nickname him "Judas" (Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 147). Nestyev's changed attitude to Prokofiev is reflected in his essay "Nasushchniye voprosi opernogo tvorchestva," *Sovetskaya muzika* 8 (1949): 17–26, esp. 20: "The modernist direction with particular conviction evinces its inability to embody true-life images when adjoined to the realistic subjects of the civil war (*Semyon Kotko*), heroic Russian history (*War and Peace*) and present-day conflict (*A Story of a Real Man*). Naturalist principles, rejecting beautiful vocal melody, ignoring traditional operatic laws and conventions, in all of these cases enter into unresolvable conflict with true-life images. Namely for this reason S. Prokofiev's operas have not been retained in the music theater repertoire."
138. Shneyerson, "Vstrechi s Prokof'yevim," 278.
139. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 78.
140. "Oda na okonchaniye voyni," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeye: Stat'i, interv'yū*, 211.
141. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 22 (*Notograficheskii spravochnik*), l. 7: "The idea for the makeup of the orchestra came to Prokofiev during the writing of the *Ode*. It was borrowed in part from Stravinsky's *Svadebka* [*Les Noces*]."
142. Nestyev's review of the November 12, 1945, premiere is illuminating in this regard: "As always after a Prokofiev premiere," he writes, "there was much argument. Some were

- delighted; others reproached the author for intentionally avoiding complex symphonic development, for his somewhat mechanical construction of the sonorous episodes.” RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 966, no. 25 (“Oda na okonchaniye voyni,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, November 23, 1945).
143. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 335, l. 140b. For purposes of clarity, the complete title of the *Cantata* has been added to the outline, and the word *number* replaced with *part*.
144. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 162.
145. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 87.
146. *The Extraordinary Commissar (Chrezvychayniy kommissar)* was the original title of *The Great Friendship (Velikaya druzhba)*. For his service to the regime, Ordzhonikidze was in 1926 elected to the Politburo. At the time of his mysterious death he had fallen out of favor with Stalin, who questioned his loyalty, but he was still buried with full Party and Soviet government honors.
147. Konstantin Aleksandrovich Uchitel', *Leningradskiy Maliy operniy teatr (1927–1948): organizatsiya i tvorchestvo* (St. Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaya akademiya teatral'nogo iskusstva, 2005), 20. Malegot did not stage *War and Peace* Part II during Prokofiev's lifetime. The theater mounted a greatly abridged eleven-scene version of the entire opera on April 1, 1955.
148. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 814, l. 29. The contract is dated November 27, 1947.
149. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 67.

CHAPTER 7

1. Prokof'yev, *Dnevnik 1907–1933*, 1:751.
2. The Fifth Symphony and Eighth Piano Sonata were jointly cited for a single award in the 1943–44 competition period.
3. The draft of Prokofiev's letter to Molotov reads:

Each year, Muzgiz publishes 2–3 of my large works, whereas I am composing more than that. At present, more than 15 large opuses are preserved in manuscript; I attach a list of them to this letter. When I presented this list to Muzgiz for inclusion in its 1948 work plan, Muzgiz reported that it could only in essence accommodate one of my works (while also reprinting several works that had already been engraved). The basis for this decision rests on the fact that its allotment of paper had been reduced from 700 to 400 tons in 1948.

I always correct my works myself while making final corrections and finishing touches, which takes on average 1–2 months for each work. In view of this I would like all of my works to be published during my lifetime, if possible. I am 56, and if the list of manuscripts continues to grow at the same rate, this dream will not, it seems, be realized.

VOKS has forwarded offers to me from French, English, and American firms to print all of my works, including opera scores, but I would consider it unacceptable [corrected by Prokofiev to read: but for me it would be extremely unpleasant] for them [my works] to appear somewhere abroad, rather than with us.

I greatly request your assistance with this matter, if possible. (RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 315, l. 1.)

4. GARF f. A–385, op. 18, yed. khr. 2346, ll. 1–7. I am grateful to Leonid Maximenkov for providing a copy of this document.
5. G. Aleksandrov, “Proyekt zapiski Upravleniya propagandii i agitatsii TsK VKP(b) sekretaryu TsK VKP(b) A. A. Zhdanovu o zapreshchyonii postanovki operi V. I. Muradeli ‘Velikaya družhba,’” in *Vlast’ i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenty TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VChK-OGPU-NKVD, o kul’turnoy politike. 1917–1953 gg.*, 627–28.
6. “Postanovleniye Politbyuro TsK VKP(b) ‘Ob opere “Velikaya družhba” V. Muradeli,’” in *Vlast’ i khudozhestvennaya intelligentsiya: Dokumenty TSK RKP(b)-VKP(b), VChK-OGPU-NKVD, o kul’turnoy politike. 1917–1953 gg.*, 630–31.
7. *Ibid.*, 631.
8. Kees Boterbloem, *Partner in Crime: The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896–1948* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 323.
9. In a memoir, Shepilov downplayed his involvement in the formation of the Resolution. Concerning the December 1947 report that he assembled for his benefactor Zhdanov about “inadequacies in the development of Soviet music,” a report that informed the Resolution, Shepilov wrote: “It seems to me that, evidently on Stalin’s order, Aleksandr Nikolayevich Kuznetsov, Zhdanov’s chief aide, corrected our text to reflect Stalin’s predilection for cruel characterizations, for taking matters to his favorite extreme—branding someone an enemy of the people. And when, from Zhdanov’s report, the whole procedure unfolded, I was in shock: this was an entirely different approach from what we had discussed. Scathing accusations of anti-populism...and against whom!? Against those we took pride in: Prokofiev, Myaskovsky, and Shostakovich.” *I primknushiy k nim Shepilov: Pravda o cheloveke, uchbyonom, voine, politike*, ed. Tamara Tolchanova and Mikhail Lozhnikov (Moscow: Zvonitsa-MG, 1998), 145.
10. “Zapis’ soveshchaniya tov. Zhdanova s avtorami i ispolnitelyami operi ‘Velikaya družhba.’ 6 yanvarya 1948 g.,” in Khrennikov, *Tak eto bilo*, 196.
11. *Ibid.*, 198.
12. Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953*, 125–29 and 137. For broader context on the political events of 1948, see pp. 122–51.
13. According to Mikhail Chulaki (1908–89), a composer who would twice serve as director of the Bolshoy Theater between 1955 and 1970, “on the second day they apparently fetched Prokofiev directly from his dacha, as witnessed by his attire: an everyday work suit of some inconceivable brownish color and baggy-kneed trousers tucked into felt boots.” M. I. Chulaki, *Ya bil direktorom Bol’shogo teatra* (Moscow: Muzika, 1994), 79.
14. Oleg Prokofiev, interview with MB, July 18, 1968.
15. M[stislav] L[eonol’dovich] Rostropovich, “Iz vospominaniy,” in *Sergey Prokof’ev 1891–1991: Dnevnik, pis’ma, besedy, vospominaniya*, 256–57.
16. Khrennikov, *Tak eto bilo*, 125.
17. Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953*, 123.
18. Maximenkov, “Stalin and Shostakovich: Letters to a ‘Friend,’” in *Shostakovich and His World*, ed. Laurel E. Fay (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 52.
19. Atovm’yan, *Vospominaniya* [typescript], chap. 4, p. 8.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
21. Ol’ga] P[avlovna] Lamm, “Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi,” in *Sergey Prokof’ev: Vospominaniya. Pis’ma. Stat’i*, 240–44.

22. Ibid., 242.
23. Ibid., 240.
24. The essay is included in Eyzenshteyn, *Metod*, ed. N. I. Kleiman, 2 vols. (Moscow: Muzei kino/Eyzenshteyn-tsentri, 2002), 2:305–15.
25. Oksana Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, trans. Anne Dwyer (Berlin: Potemkin, 2001), 231–32.
26. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 104.
27. "Pis'mo I. G. Bol'shakova E. K. Voroshilovu o nagrazhdenii S. M. Eyzenshteyna ordenom Lenina," in *Kremlyovskiy kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenti*, 800.
28. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 103–5; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 154–55.
29. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 245.
30. RGASPI f. 77, op. 3-s, d. 142, l. 7. I am grateful to Leonid Maximenkov for providing a copy of this document.
31. Ibid., l. 8.
32. "Postanovleniye politbyuro TsK VKP(b) 'Ob opere "Velikaya družba" V. Muradeli,'" 631.
33. Kabalevsky was thinking only of himself. Seemingly managing to have his name struck from the list of "formalist" composers—Popov took his place—he did not wish to be associated with an unrepentant one.
34. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 245.
35. "Response of Sergei Prokofiev to the Resolution of February 10, 1948," in Jonathan Walker and Marina Frolova-Walker, *Newly Translated Source Documents*, program booklet for the symposium "Music and Dictatorship: Russia under Stalin," Carnegie Hall, New York City, February 22, 2003, pp. 20–22. The version of this document that appeared in *Sovetskaya muzika* in 1948 excluded the reference to *Zdravitsa*. See "Pis'mo Prokof'yeva Sobraniyu moskovskikh kompozitorov i muzikovedov," in *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeye: Stat'i, interv'y*, 220.
36. "Response of Dmitri Shostakovich to the Resolution of February 10, 1948," in Walker and Frolova-Walker, *Newly Translated Source Documents*, p. 18.
37. Oleg Prokofiev, interview with MB, July 18, 1968.
38. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 66; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 131.
39. Svyatoslav Prokof'yev, "O moikh roditelyakh: Beseda s'ina kompozitora (S. P.) s muzikovedom Nataliyey Savkinoy (N. S.)," 225–26.
40. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 560 (Opredeleniya sudebnoy kollegii po grazhdanskim delam gorsuda Sverdlovskogo rayona gor. Moskvi i Verkhovnogo suda RSFSR o nedeystvitel'nosti 1-go braka S. S. Prokof'yeva s L. I. Kodinoy), l. 1.
41. According to Svyatoslav, "When father decided to legalize his new marriage, to his enormous surprise the court told him that a divorce was entirely unnecessary; they considered the marriage, concluded on October 1, 1923, in Ettal (Germany), was now invalid, since it had not been registered in a Soviet consulate. Mama, entering the USSR as his wife, at some mysterious point ceased to be so. Father, being certain of the legality of his marriage to Mother, approached a higher court, but there he was told the same thing—thus he was able to register his new marriage without a divorce. Lawyers later told me that the 'Prokofiev case' was famous in Soviet legal practice." Svyatoslav Prokof'yev, "O moikh roditelyakh: Beseda s'ina kompozitora (S. P.) s muzikovedom Nataliyey Savkinoy (N. S.)," 226.
42. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 561.
43. Anna Holdcroft to MB, unpublished letter of October 10, 1964.

44. Frederick Reinhardt to MB, unpublished letter of March 4, 1963.
45. Svyatoslav Prokof'yev, "O moikh roditelyakh: Beseda sina kompozitora (S. P.) s muzikovedom Nataliyey Savkinoy (N. S.)," 227.
46. *Ibid.*, 226–27.
47. *Ibid.*, 228.
48. Chemberdzhii, *XX vek Lini Prokof'yevoy*, 252–53. Lina provides the surnames of five of her Lefortovo torturers in her petition: "Zubov, Malikov, Belov, and Ryumin, who concluded [the investigation]." "Kulishov," she adds, "headed the [MGB] investigation department." The RGASPI files on two of these horrendous, uneducated individuals, Pyotr Andreyevich Malikov (1901–?) and Nikolay Arsenyevich Kuleshov (1909–?), show "disciplined" work as junior and senior investigators in factory, institute, and prison settings.
49. Inna Chernitskaya and Nelli Kravets, "Zhertvi stalinskikh repressiy: O lagernoy zhizni Lini Ivanovni Prokof'yevoy i sobstvennoy sud'be," *Muzikal'naya akademiya* 2 (2000): 237.
50. Ye[vgeniya] A[leksandrovna] Taratuta, "Iz vospominaniy," in *Sergey Prokof'yev 1891–1991: Dnevnik, pis'ma, besedi, vospominaniya*, 235.
51. Chernitskaya and Kravets, "Zhertvi stalinskikh repressiy: O lagernoy zhizni Lini Ivanovni Prokof'yevoy i sobstvennoy sud'be," 239.
52. Taratuta, "Iz vospominaniy," 236.
53. Svyatoslav Prokof'yev, "O moikh roditelyakh: Beseda sina kompozitora (S. P.) s muzikovedom Nataliyey Savkinoy (N. S.)," 231. The certificate is dated June 15, 1956; the decision by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR to release Lina came on June 13. She was fully rehabilitated, and provided, like Mira, with a pension of 700 rubles a month.
54. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 560, ll. 2–6.
55. Unsigned, "Pamyati ushedshikh," *Sovetskaya muzika* 8 (1968): 159.
56. *Perviy vsesoyuzniy s'yezd sovetskikh kompozitorov: Stenograficheskiy otchyot* (Moscow: Izdaniye soyuza sovetskikh kompozitorov SSSR, 1948), 13.
57. *Ibid.*, 16–17.
58. Asafyev writes: "In Stravinsky's 1945 [*sic*] book *Musical Poetics* we find an idealization of the medieval—entirely in the spirit of fascist 'aesthetics' and philosophy—and Tartuffe-like sighs about the fact that 'the spirit of our time is ailing and, because of this, music is marked with symptoms of a pathologic blemish that facilitates the further spread of sinfulness in human consciousness'" (*ibid.*, 17). In context, the actual quotation reads: "Modern man is progressively losing his understanding of values and his sense of proportions.... In the domain of music, the consequences of this misunderstanding are these: on one hand there is a tendency to turn the mind away from what I shall call the higher mathematics of music in order to degrade music to servile employment, and to vulgarize it by adapting it to the requirements of an elementary utilitarianism—as we shall soon see on examining Soviet music. On the other hand, since the mind itself is ailing, the music of our time, and particularly the music that calls itself and believes itself *pure*, carries within the symptoms of a pathologic blemish and spreads the germs of a new original sin." Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music in the Form of Six Lessons*, trans. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 47.
59. *Perviy vsesoyuzniy s'yezd sovetskikh kompozitorov: Stenograficheskiy otchyot*, 38–39.
60. *Ibid.*, 39. *The Duenna* was branded a formalist opera in several articles in 1948, including the newspaper summaries of repertoire discussions at the Kirov Theater. See "Sozdadim polnotsenniye muzikal'niye spektakli (Na sobranii rabotnikov Teatra operi i baleta im. S. M. Kirova)," *Leningradskaya pravda*, March 21, 1948; and "Zritel' pred'yavlyayet schyot (Na konferentsii v Teatre operi i baleta im. S. M. Kirova)," *Vecherniy Leningrad*, July 8, 1948.

61. *Perŭyĭĭ vsesoyuzniĭĭ s'yezd sovetskikh kompozitorov: Stenograficheskiy otchyot*, 40.
62. *Ibid.*, 45.
63. In 1994, Khrennikov declared that "a group of people wrote the speech. Some of them are still alive today. I don't want to give their names. Yarustovsky oversaw the basic writing of the speech. V. Gorodinsky, S. Shlifshteyn, and someone else wrote the international section" (*Tak eto bilo*, 130). Boris Yarustovsky (1911–78) was head of the music sector of the Central Committee Propaganda and Agitation Department; Viktor Gorodinsky (1902–59) served as chief editor at Muzgiz.
64. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yevе. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 108–9; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 157.
65. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 161–62.
66. *Perŭyĭĭ vsesoyuzniĭĭ s'yezd sovetskikh kompozitorov: Stenograficheskiy otchyot*, 380.
67. Tomoff, *Creative Union: The Professional Organization of Soviet Composers, 1939–1953*, 148–50.
68. The list, provided in a February 14, 1948, "Excerpt" from Glavrepertkom "Order No. 17," is published in facsimile in *Sovetskaya muzika* 4 (1991): 17.
69. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 123, l. 7. The letter is dated June 25, 1948.
70. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 248. Mira repaid the loan to Lamm's widow in 1960.
71. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 5 (August 17, 1948).
72. Stalin overturned the "unlawful" prohibition in a March 16, 1949, memorandum to the Committee on Arts Affairs (a copy went to Prokofiev). It is published in facsimile in *Sovetskaya muzika* 4 (1991): 17.
73. S. A. Balasanyan. *Stat'i. Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. K 100-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya kompozitora*, ed. K. S. Balasanyan (Moscow: Kompozitor, 2003), 97.
74. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 315, l. 11.
75. RGALI f. 2040, op. 2, yed. khr. 224, l. 16.
76. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yevе. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 109; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 157.
77. In the novella, the surname is spelled Mereshev.
78. Boris Polevoi, *A Story about a Real Man*, trans. Joe Fineberg (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), 120.
79. The first phrase, "Lyotchik bez nog—eto ptitsa bez kril'yev," occurs in scene 5 at rehearsal 123; the second, "A ved' ti zhe sovetskiy chelovek," occurs at rehearsal 173. On the semi-tonal transpositions of the second phrase, see Taruskin, "Story of a Real Man, The," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, 4:556.
80. Polevoi, *A Story about a Real Man*, 226–27.
81. Emerson, "Shklovsky's *ostranenie*, Bakhtin's *vnenakhodimost'* (How Distance Serves an Aesthetics of Arousal Differently from an Aesthetics Based on Pain)," *Poetics Today* 26:4 (Winter 2005): 660.
82. Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 103.
83. The libretto in the original 1947–48 piano score has several passages that broach the fantastic. The opera becomes a series of delusions and counterdelusions, with the recitative passages offering a distorted version of everyday existence, and the songs, dances, and choruses denoting Stalinist super-existence. Scene 7 is the most far-fetched. Here the surgeon, his superior, and a lieutenant announce that the pilots at the sanatorium have been summoned to defend the city of Stalingrad. The pilots celebrate; a farewell dance is organized in their honor. Aleksey has not, however, been recalled, despite near-readiness to return

- to service. By way of demonstration, he dances a waltz with Anyuta. It saps his strength. Anyuta, standing alone, expresses her joy at being secretly engaged to Gvozdyov, but frets what awaits him at the front. The dancing flows into the next room. Donning party masks, Andrey and Kukushkin tease Anyuta's secret out of her in a witty jingle. The dancers return, and Aleksey joins them in a rumba. His performance persuades his minders that he will be able to fly again. Aleksey contentedly bids Andrey and the other pilots farewell. They march off, suitcases in hand. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 20–22 (photocopy provided by Nelly Kravetz).
84. Information on the quotations in the opera from Shlifshteyn, "S. Prokof'yev i yego opera 'Povest' o nastoyashchem cheloveke," in *Izbrannīye stat'i* (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1977), 112 and 116.
 85. *Obrabotki russkikh narodnikh pesen dlya golosa s f-p.* (1944).
 86. L. Aleksandrovskiy, "Muzikal'naya dramaturgiya operi S. Prokof'yeva 'Povest' o nastoyashchem cheloveke," in *Iz istorii russkoy i sovetskoy muziki*, ed. A. Kandinskiy (Moscow: Muzika, 1971), 193. Polevoy's novella was adapted for the screen. The eponymous film, which starred Pavel Kadochnikov (1915–88, perhaps best known as the Pretender Vladimir in *Ivan the Terrible*) and included music by Kryukov, was released by Mosfilm on October 22, 1949—just ten months after the private hearing of Prokofiev's opera.
 87. The linkage calls to mind the sentiments of the arch-patriotic World War II song "Wait for Me and I'll Come Back" (Zhdi menya i ya vernus'), by Konstantin Simonov (1915–79) and Matvey Blanter (1903–90).
 88. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 267, l. 5 (May 14, 1948).
 89. Prokof'yev, "Povest' o chelovecheskom muzhestve," reproduced from the October 30, 1947, edition of *Vechernyaya Moskva*, in S. S. Prokof'yev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 253.
 90. Egorova, *Soviet Film Music: An Historical Survey*, 117.
 91. The document is preserved in RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 32. Although *Taymir Calls* You never became an opera, the play was adapted for Soviet television in 1970.
 92. Dikhovichniy (1911–63) wrote satirical poems, stories, and stage plays. Many of the plays were co-authored with Moris Slobodskoy (1913–91), and feature merciless punning. A *Fakir for an Hour* (1945), for example, concerns a group of vaudeville performers who sing and dance their way into a booked-up hotel. "You have numbers for us," the hotel manager informs them, "but we don't have rooms [nomera] for you." "Fakir na chas," in VI. Dikhovichniy and M. Slobodskoy, *Razniye komedii* (Moscow: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1965), 8. Even the title of the play is a double entendre. "Fakir na chas" is Russian slang for a minstrel, but the play features an actual fakir.
 93. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 31, l. 6. This source contains extracts from the libretto, text-setting schema, and information about marine biology.
 94. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 16, ll. 13–22.
 95. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 135, l. 3 (letter of July 24, 1948).
 96. Ibid., l. 5 (letter of July 17, 1952).
 97. Ibid. The two compositions are *On Guard for Peace* and *The Meeting of the Volga and the Don*, discussed in chapter 8.
 98. Kostik performs the vaudeville routine for the seemingly despondent Mark. Having taken a cab home, three drunkards enter their building. Two of them prop the third against a wall and go to ring the doorbell. Their comrade falls down. They stand him up, and go again to ring the doorbell, but he falls down again. And again. Vexed, they turn to the cabbie: "See

- what happens if you drink too much?” “Truly awful,” the cabbie replies, “You’ve stood him on his head three times!” (Condensed excerpt from the libretto, RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 29, ll. 170b.–180b.)
99. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 269, l. 6.
100. L. Polyakova, “‘Dalyokiye morya’: O poslednem opernom zamisle S. Prokof’yeva,” *Sovetskaya muzika* 3 (1963): 56.
101. Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 112–13; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 160.
102. B[oris] Khaykin, *Besedi o dirizhorskoy remesle. Stat’i* (Moscow: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1984), 79.
103. This and subsequent quotations in the paragraph from a letter to Prokofiev from Khaykin, as transcribed in RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 163 (September 24, 1948).
104. Samosud, “Vstrechi s Prokof’yevim,” 165.
105. Lamm, “Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi,” 249.
106. Information and quotations in this and the next three paragraphs from Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 120–25; and RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 166–68.
107. Khaykin, *Besedi o dirizhorskoy remesle. Stat’i*. 80. Khaykin lamented the end of his friendship with Prokofiev. He declared that his “conscience was clean” with respect to *A Story of a Real Man*, and that he had defended rather than denounced the opera before cultural officials. “I listened to the reproaches and accusations in silence, and when asked directly [about the opera], I answered that I first and foremost consider Prokofiev to be a brilliant composer.” He regretted only that he had not “stopped working” on the opera and “advised Prokofiev to wait for better times. But I could not possibly have foreseen that the composer would endure such harsh attacks” (80–81).
108. Quotations in this and the next paragraph from Vas[ilii] Kukharskiy, “Vazhnaya zadacha sovetskikh kompozitorov,” *Izvestiya*, January 13, 1949, p. 3.
109. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 315, l. 14.
110. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 123, l. 9.
111. This and the previous quotations in the paragraph from Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 125; and RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 168.
112. The transcript is reproduced, with corrections, in Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 126–36; and RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 169–78.
113. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98 (Prokof’yev, *Konspekt dlya dnevnika ili kratkiy dnevnik*), l. 9 (November 3, 1952, entry).
114. Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 129; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 171.
115. Samosud, “Vstrechi s Prokof’yevim,” 166. See also Taruskin, “*War and Peace*,” 4:1103.
116. Information and quotations in this and the next two paragraphs from Mendel’son-Prokof’yeva, “Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof’yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi,” 137–39; and RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, ll. 178–79.
117. Khrennikov does not recall this incident in his two sets of memoirs. He claims in general that his appointment as head of the Union of Soviet Composers came as a shocking surprise that rattled him to the core. His efforts to distance himself from the regime while also justifying his actions on behalf of the regime are sometimes bewildering, as the following quotations attest:

When in 1948 Stalin named me to the post [of General Secretary of the Union of Soviet Composers], I considered the appointment a personal tragedy. Beforehand I was occupied with music alone; then suddenly I found myself in a mishmash of political dirt and slander. (*O vremeni, o muzike i muzikantakh, o sebe*, 131)

But I think that my election to the post in the USSR Union of Composers was perhaps the best outcome of the situation in those years. For, naturally, I tried both then and afterward to soften all of the blows that rained down on our... organization and its individual members. (*Tak eto bilo*, 131)

118. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 235. These points from Marina Rakhmanova's introduction.
119. *Ibid.*, 255–56.
120. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 400b.
121. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 255.
122. RGALI f. 2658, op. 1, yed. khr. 460, ll. 1–3.
123. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 241.

CHAPTER 8

1. The history of the commission is sketched by Kabalevsky in his editorial commentary to S. S. Prokof'yev i N. Ya. Myaskovskiy: *Perepiska*, 543 n. 3 to letter 385.
2. "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 252.
3. Rostropovich, "Vstrechi s S. S. Prokof'yevim," in S. S. Prokof'yev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 471; RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 906, no. 127.
4. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 673, l. 1.
5. *Ibid.*, l. 3. The town of Ruza is situated in the western outskirts of Moscow.
6. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 165.
7. Boris Schwarz, *Music and Musical Life in Soviet Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 236.
8. "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 250.
9. *Ibid.*, 250–51.
10. *Ibid.*, 279. Sometime in 1952 or 1953, the three-volume edition became a four-volume edition. In a recollection titled "The Last Days," Mira writes: "Sergey Sergeyevich discussed all of the details concerning the publication of the four-volume edition with Muzgiz and the editor L. T. Atovmyan, expressing his desires in detail." M. Prokof'yeva, "Posledniye dni," in *Sergey Prokof'yev: Stat'i i materiali*, 283.
11. December 29, 1952, entry, RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, ll. 14–15.
12. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 231 and 232.
13. Volkhov, *Teatral'niye vechera*, 399. The Russian version of the Psyche and Eros myth, which Volkhov hoped to convert into a scenario, was written in 1783 by Ippolit Bogdanovich (1744–1803). It bears the title *Dushenka. An Ancient Tale in Free Verse (Dushen'ka. Drevnyaya povest' v vol'nikh stikhakh)*.
14. A devoted Leninist and veteran of the civil war, Bazhov nonetheless came in for attack in 1938 during the anti-Trotskyite campaign. He was expelled for just over a year from the Communist Party.

15. There exists an operatic version of the same tale, composed by Kirill Molchanov (1922–82) in 1949, the year he graduated from the Moscow Conservatory. The opera, which bears Rimsky-Korsakov's influence, was produced in 1951, and incorporated the suggestions for alterations recommended by the Union of Soviet Composers on August 13, 1949. See RGALI f. 2077, op. 1, yed. khr. 355 for a transcript of the adjudication.
16. RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, yed. khr. 120, l. 40.
17. Ibid., l. 73.
18. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 979, no. 40 (unsigned, "Teatral'naya khronika: Novyiye baletnyiye spektakli v Bol'shom teatre," *Teatral'naya Moskva* 48 [November 26–December 2, 1952]).
19. Information and quotations in the preceding paragraphs from RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, yed. khr. 120, ll. 17–24.
20. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 84. The outline is dated September 6, 1948.
21. This and the following quotations in the paragraph from L[eonid] Lavrovskiy, "'Seyf' tvorcheskogo dara (iz vospominaniy o Sergeye Prokof'yeve)," in S. S. Prokof'ev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 520–23.
22. His views on the relationship between ballet and folk dance can be fruitfully contrasted with those of Lev Tolstoy. For Tolstoy, in the Russian literature scholar Sibelan Forrester's summation, "folk dance is to ballet as sex within marriage is to prostitution and as a good death is to a public execution" (personal communication, November 21, 2007). For Prokofiev, the opposite clearly seems to be the case.
23. Igor' Moiseyev, "Balet i deystvitel'nost'," *Literaturnaya gazeta*, April 2, 1952, p. 2.
24. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 92, l. 100b.
25. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 16 (January 14, 1953). The reference is to Ludwig (Léon) Minkus (1826–1917), habitually denigrated for the triteness of his ballet scores.
26. Ibid., l. 14 (December 18, 1952); RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 87, l. 60.
27. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 84, l. 30b.
28. Croce, "Theory and Practice in the Russian Ballet," in *Writing in the Dark, Dancing in The New Yorker*, 277.
29. Information in this paragraph from S[vetlana] Katonova, *Muzika sovetskogo baleta: Ocherki istorii i teorii* (Leningrad: Sovetskiy kompozitor, 1990), 98–108.
30. "Neurotic" and "brooding": Croce, "The Search for Cinderella," 481; "to choose between": "Theory and Practice in the Russian Ballet," 277.
31. "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 243. Getting the music to Zibitsev was the biggest headache, since it was in Richter's possession. On June 15 and 16, Prokofiev, virtually incapacitated in Nikolina Gora, sent a pair of urgent letters to Lavrovsky in Moscow, beseeching him to obtain the score and arrange for Zibitsev to travel to Nikolina Gora to review it (RGALI f. 3045, op. 1, yed. khr. 259, ll. 1–2).
32. Mendel'son-Prokof'eva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 159.
33. Ibid., 161. The official in question was Nikolay Goryainov, former director of Malegot.
34. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 92, l. 27.
35. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 257.
36. Mendel'son-Prokof'eva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeve. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 163.
37. Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 257.
38. Ibid., 258.

39. RGASPI f. 82, op. 2, d. 1464, l. 63. "Lechsanupr" is the abbreviation for "lechebno-sanitarnoye upravleniye ministerstva zdravookhraneniya SSSR" (Medical Facility Administration of the Ministry of Health of the USSR).
40. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 170. The note in question is dated February 21, 1950.
41. Rikhter, "O Prokof'yev," in S. S. *Prokof'yev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 468.
42. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 196; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 214 (April 20, 1950). The "failure" of *Ruslan and Lyudmila* related to a shift in operatic taste in St. Petersburg against indigenous repertoire in favor of Italian operas. It also endured criticism for its anti-realist musical complexities and extravagances (Taruskin, "*Ruslan and Lyudmila*," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, 4:94).
43. Prokofiev to Balasanyan, letter of July 2, 1950, in S. A. *Balasanyan. Stat'i. Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. K 100-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya kompozitora*, 252.
44. The commission was facilitated by Olga Ochakovskaya, a State Radio employee who apparently introduced Prokofiev and Marshak to each other. See her "Prokof'yev na detskom radioveshchani," in *Sergey Sergeyevich Prokof'yev*, 38–41. The contract, signed by Ivan Andreyev, specifies a six-movement score that "must be accessible for children," due on February 28, 1950, for a fee of 12,000 rubles (RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, l. 6).
45. Before *On Guard for Peace*, the oratorio bore the working titles *Glory to Peace (Slava miru)*, *War for Peace (Voyna za mir)*, and *Song [Word] of Peace (Slovo o mire)*.
46. Stanley D. Krebs, *Soviet Composers and the Development of Soviet Music* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 163 n. 2.
47. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 199–201; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 216 (May 11, 1950).
48. Il'ya Erenburg, *Na tsokole istoriy... Pis'ma 1931–1967*, ed. B. Ya. Frezinskiy (Moscow: Agraf, 2004), 357; *Bol'shaya tsenzura: Pisateli i zhurnalisty v Strane Sovetov. 1917–1956*, 620–22.
49. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950," 206.
50. Letter of August 11, 1950, as transcribed in *ibid.*, 217.
51. *Ibid.*, 218.
52. The following information from Lamm, "Vospominaniya. Fragment: 1948–1951 godi," 254–55, 260–61.
53. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 11 (November 23, 1952).
54. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950," 218–20.
55. Tertz, "On Socialist Realism," 154.
56. Reminiscence of the musicologist Vera Sukharevskaya (1903–77), in S. A. *Samosud: Stat'i, vospominaniya, pis'ma*, 159.
57. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 236 (undated).
58. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "O Sergeye Sergeyeviche Prokof'yev," in S. S. *Prokof'yev: Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 383; Prokof'yeva, "Kak sozdavalas' oratoriya 'Na strazhe mira,'" *Sovetskaya muzika* 3 (1962): 108.
59. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 226; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 237.
60. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yev. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 226.

61. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 236.
62. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 226; RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 375, l. 237.
63. The award was announced in the March 17, 1951, issue of *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*.
64. Unsigned, "New Wolf," *Time*, August 28, 1950, p. 58.
65. Fay, *Shostakovich: A Life*, 175. The anecdote comes from the composer Galina Ustvol'skaya (1919–2006).
66. Lavrovskiy, "‘Seyf’ tvorcheskogo dara (iz vospominaniy o Sergeye Prokof'yeye)," 524.
67. RGALI f. 648, op. 5, yed. khr. 249, l. 4. Prokofiev dictated the letter to Mira.
68. *Ibid.*, l. 19. This letter is undated. From another it emerges that, as late as November 30, 1952, Prokofiev had still not received payment for the 594-page score (*ibid.*, l. 18).
69. RGASPI f. 17, op. 133, d. 368, l. 28.
70. RGASPI f. 17, op. 133, d. 368, l. 30.
71. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 3.
72. *Ibid.*, l. 10 (November 6, 1952). Prokofiev refers to Shostakovich's *The Sun Shines over Our Motherland* (*Nad Rodinoy nashey solntse siyayet*).
73. *Ibid.*, l. 5.
74. *Ibid.*, l. 14.
75. Rostropovich provided this information to the filmmaker Mariya Yatskova in an April 2004 interview; he also recalls going to the Radio Committee with Vedernikov to present the Symphony for approval. Vedernikov played the piano score of the first three movements alone; Rostropovich assisted him with the glissandi in the fourth movement. Rostropovich adds that "the old ladies" on the Radio Committee editorial staff "went into rapture" over the score. I am grateful to Ms. Yatskova for providing a copy of the transcript of the interview.
76. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 2.
77. *Ibid.*, l. 5 (September 28, 1952).
78. *Ibid.*, l. 7.
79. *Ibid.*, l. 8 (October 27, 1952).
80. *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeye: Stat'i, interv'yuy*, 230. The bulletin is dated December 26, 1952.
81. Brown, "The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev," 456.
82. *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeye: Stat'i, interv'yuy*, 230 n. 1. For a translation of Kabalevsky's entire recollection of his meeting with Prokofiev regarding the Symphony, see Brown, "The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev," 457–58.
83. Brown, "The Symphonies of Sergei Prokofiev," 462.
84. *Ibid.*, 463–64.
85. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 18 (February 4, 1953).
86. The construction of the waterway was largely carried out by prisoners.
87. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 168. In a 2001 memoir, Rostropovich takes credit for managing "to convince [Prokofiev] to compose [*The Meeting of the Volga and the Don*], for which Radio immediately provided the funds that he greatly needed at the time"; Rostropovich adds that he found it difficult to conceal from Prokofiev that the commission was essentially an act of charity. "It was all done with the consent of Balasanyan who, despite his high rank in the management of music at Radio, took an undoubted risk, seeking neither to compromise his conscience nor his respect for Prokofiev's genius" (Rostropovich, "Vospominaniya," in S. A. Balasanyan. *Stat'i. Vospominaniya. Pis'ma. K 100-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya kompozitora*, 97–98).

88. Rostropovich, “Vstrechi s S. S. Prokof’evim,” 472. One of the various potential sources of inspiration for the score was the article by M. Mikhaylov, “Stroyki kommunizma—vsenarodnoye delo Volgo–Don,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, March 6, 1951, p. 1.
89. “Muzika i zhizn’,” in S. S. Prokof’ev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 256.
90. Prokof’ev, “Vstrecha Volgi s Donom,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, November 17, 1951, p. 2; S. S. Prokof’ev: *Materiali, dokumenti, vospominaniya*, 257.
91. P. A. Warneck, “The Volga–Don Navigation Canal,” *Russian Review* 13:4 (October 1954): 286 and 290.
92. For example, “VOLGO-DON POSTROILI! Uallstritovtsev rasstroili” (roughly: “Volga–Don Constructed! Wall Street Disrupted”).
93. Information in this paragraph from unsigned articles in two issues: “Rabotniki iskusstva na trasse kanala,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, July 12, 1952, p. 1; and “Na Volgo–Done,” *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*, July 16, 1952, p. 1.
94. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 806, l. 25.
95. The report comes from the column “News in the Arts” (Novosti iskusstva) on p. 1 of the January 12, 1952, *Sovetskoye iskusstvo*. Framed by comments about rehearsals for a high school drama called “Right to Happiness” (Pravo na schast’ye), a professional production of *King Lear*, and a Soviet photography exhibition, the report reads: “Sergey Prokofiev worked with great intensity on his Concerto for Violoncello and Orchestra. In his composition the author made wide use of Russian folksong material. The Concerto was created in close kinship with the violoncellist Mstislav Rostropovich, to whom it is dedicated. This collaboration allowed the composer to bring out more fully the richest melodic and technical possibilities of the instrument. The Concerto was completed at the start of 1952. S. Prokofiev’s new work will be premiered in the near future. In the photograph: S. Prokofiev discusses one of the passages of the Concerto with M. Rostropovich.”
96. “Prokofiev and Atovmian: Correspondence, 1933–1952,” 264.
97. *Ibid.*, 265.
98. *Ibid.*, 268.
99. V. Dukhovskaya, “Zametki iz dnevnika,” *Sovetskaya muzika* 4 (1981): 96. Dukhovskaya notes Prokofiev being unable to recall his Moscow telephone number when she asked him for it after the performance: “‘I don’t know, I don’t know,’ he answered with great suffering in his voice, ‘I don’t remember. Everything in the past I remember, but everything in the present I don’t remember, I don’t remember.’”
100. Rostropovich, CD liner notes to *Rostropovich: The Russian Years 1950–1974*, EMI 72016, p. 28. The cellist recapitulated his point about “the gap between the mundane and the sublime” in another anecdotal account of his collaboration with Prokofiev, this one provided to Claude Samuel:

[Prokofiev] would ask your opinion of each note, each bar, but it couldn’t be you who went to him with a question!... From time to time, he would tell me, ‘Here, play me a rapid passage on the cello—anything at all, as long as it’s fast.’ You can imagine how I’d put my mind to it, all the more since I had taken some composition courses. So, I would offer a passage in which I tried to match his own style and really give my very best. In that two-bar passage, there may have been as many as sixty-four notes!

He would look at the passage in silence, think about it, then pick up a little eraser, get rid of one of the sixty-four notes, and replace it with another note. By then I’d be ready to jump out the window, because it would be

precisely that new note which added the touch of genius to the passage. And I'd wonder: Why couldn't *I* find the right note? One note in sixty-four was enough to make the difference between an ungifted lout and a genius! (Claude Samuel, *Mstislav Rostropovich and Galina Vishnevskaya: Russia, Music, and Liberty*, trans. E. Thomas Glasow [Portland, Ore.: Amadeus Press, 1995], 59)

101. Accordingly, Rostropovich's 1959 piano score of the Sinfonia Concertante contains two versions of the third movement, but in a confusing way: in the middle section, the top systems of the pages show the original version, the bottom systems the revision. The 1959 orchestral score places the revision in an appendix.
102. Atovmyan provides the details in a June 24, 1952, letter ("Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 270).
103. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 4.
104. V. Ya. Shebalin: *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo*, comp. V. I. Razheva; introd. T. N. Khrennikov (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 2003), 207.
105. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 5.
106. *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeye: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 228.
107. Steven Isserlis, "Prokofiev's Unfinished Concertino—A Twisted Tale," *Three Oranges: The Journal of the Serge Prokofiev Foundation* 3 (May 2002): 32.
108. Ibid.
109. *Prokof'yev o Prokof'yeye: Stat'i, interv'yu*, 228.
110. RGALI f. 1929, op. 1, yed. khr. 179.
111. Prokof'yeva, "Posledniye dni," 288.
112. Prokofiev is referring here to the duet between Natasha and Sonya and Prince Andrey's arioso about the oak tree in scene 1 of the opera. The duet appears to be modeled on that sung by Tatyana and Olga in Chaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and by Liza and Paulina in his *Queen of Spades*.
113. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 316, ll. 10b.–2. Prokofiev wrote again to Grikurov on October 27, 1949, for a progress report on the opera: "I would very much like to know if you have received the complete piano score of *War and Peace*, if you have looked it over, and what plans have arisen for it. When is the theater thinking of beginning work on the opera?" (l. 50b.).
114. Mendel'son-Prokof'yeva, "Vospominaniya o Sergeye Prokof'yeye. Fragment: 1946–1950 godi," 167.
115. "Prokofiev and Atovmyan: Correspondence, 1933–1952," 251–52.
116. Brown, "Prokofiev's *War and Peace*: A Chronicle," 321; see also Prokof'yeva, "Posledniye dni," 281.
117. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 7.
118. Ibid., l. 8 (October 18, 1952).
119. Ibid., l. 9 (November 3 and 4).
120. Samosud, "Vstrechi s Prokof'yevim," 169.
121. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, ll. 10–11 (November 9, 16, and 27).
122. Prokof'yeva, "Posledniye dni," 289. Additional information in this paragraph from pp. 290–92.
123. RGALI f. 1929, op. 3, yed. khr. 265, l. 24.
124. RGALI f. 1929, op. 2, yed. khr. 98, l. 21.

125. Khaykin to Khrapchenko, letter of November 15, 1972, in *Deyateli russkogo iskusstva i M. B. Khrapchenko, predsedatel' Vsesoyuznogo komiteta po delam iskusstv: aprel' 1939-yanvar' 1948*, 548.
126. The preceding information from Maximenkov, "Prokofiev's Immortalization," in *Sergey Prokofiev and His World*, 296–97.
127. Unsigned, "Prokofieff, Soviet Composer, Dies; In Favor after Communist Rebuke," *New York Times*, March 9, 1953, pp. 1 and 29.
128. Olin Downes, "A Great Composer; Prokofieff at His Best Was a Modern Master," *New York Times*, March 15, 1953, p. X7.
129. Svyatoslav Prokof'yev, "O moikh roditelyakh: Beseda sina kompozitora (S. P.) s muzikovedom Nataliyey Savkinoy (N. S.)," 230. The catalog number of the photograph is 0–305236.
130. Schnittke, "On Prokofiev," 65–66.
131. RGALI f. 2045 op. 1, yed. khr. 171, l. 8.
132. Ibid., ll. 8–9.
133. RGALI f. 648, op. 5, yed. khr. 301, ll. 1–11.
134. For the precise details, see Maximenkov, "Prokofiev's Immortalization," 298–328.
135. A critical edition of the 1935 score is in preparation.
136. A. Volkov, 'Voyna i mir' Prokof'yeva: Opit analiza variantov operi (Moscow: Muzika, 1976).
137. This and the next two quotations in the paragraph from Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 337.
138. Series SF, Folder ID Prokofiev, Mary Baker Eddy Library. The letter, written by Prokofiev on the stationery of the St. Moritz Hotel in New York, is addressed to Miss Crain, a long-time Christian Science practitioner with whom he and Lina had consulted in Paris.

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Glossary

Glavlit (Glavnoye upravleniye po delam literaturī i izdatelstv), Chief Directorate for Literary and Publishing Affairs. Oversaw the protection of official interests through the censorship and regulation of printed media.



Glavrepertkom (Glavnoye upravleniye po kontrolyu za zrelishchami i reperturom), Chief Directorate for the Control of Stage Performance and Repertory. Censored and regulated the content of ballet, opera, and theater productions for public viewing. (Film, in contrast, was overseen by the Central Committee.)



Gosplan (Gosudarstvennaya planovaya komissiya), State Planning Commission. Oversaw Soviet economic activity until 1991, including the formation, legislation, and enactment of the Five-Year Plans. Abram Mendelson was a member of its executive committee.



Muzfond (Muzikal'nīy fond), financial division of the Union of Soviet Composers. Created in 1939, with Levon Atovmyan serving as administrative director and deputy chairman from 1940 to 1948, Muzfond provided financial and material assistance to composers, ensembles, and theaters; subsidized the editing, arranging, and printing of scores; and funded the building and management of composers' residences in, among other places, Ivanovo.



NKID (Narodnīy Komissariat Inostrannikh Del), People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Also abbreviated as Narkomindel. Directed Soviet external politics from 1917 to 1946, with Vyacheslav Molotov as head from 1939 until two years after it became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerstvo inostrannikh del).

◆

NKVD (Narodniy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Established in 1934 to protect the security of the Soviet State through political repression, intelligence gathering, and the management of the massive Gulag prison system. The NKVD was reorganized before, during, and after World War II. The Ministry of State Security (Ministerstvo Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, or MGB), which came into being in 1946, was one of its successors.

◆

Orgkomitet, Organizing Committee of the Union of Soviet Composers. Established in 1939 to oversee the administration of Muzfond, arrange for the expansion of the Union into the Soviet Republics, and manage membership rosters. It was dissolved at the First Congress of the Union in 1948. The Orgkomitet was chaired by Reinhold Glier, with Aram Khachaturyan serving as deputy chairman.

◆

Sovinformbyuro (Sovetskoye informatsionnoye byuro), Soviet Information Bureau. Established by order of Sovnarkom and the Central Committee in 1941 to dispatch military situation reports to the public as part of its broader function as an international propaganda organization. Lina Prokofiev occasionally translated for the literature division, 1941–43. In 1961 Sovinformbyuro was transformed into the Novosti press agency, the second-largest Soviet news service.

◆

Sovnarkom (Sovet narodnikh komissarov), Council of People's Commissars. The principal governing body of the Soviet Union from its founding until the end of World War II. In 1946, renamed the Council of Ministers (Sovet ministrov).

◆

Soyuz sovetских kompozitorov SSSR, USSR Union of Soviet Composers. Established by Central Committee resolution in 1932 following the dissolution of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians and the Association of Contemporary Music, the Union managed the Soviet music profession, from the commissioning and financing of individual works to their adjudication, performance, and publication. The Orgkomitet was dissolved in 1948 at the First Congress of the Union; Tikhon Khrennikov was thereafter installed as the Union's general secretary (later first secretary), a position he held until 1991.

◆

VOKS (Vsesoyuznoye obshchestvo kul'turnikh svyazey zagranitsey), All-Union Society for Cultural Ties Abroad. Founded in 1925 and dissolved in 1958; propagandized the cultural and scientific achievements of the peoples of the Soviet Union abroad and facilitated international exchanges. Organized exhibitions, published an English-language bulletin, and arranged concerts and festivals. In 1938, Prokofiev performed at a VOKS event in London.

◆

Vsesoyuzniy komitet po delam iskusstv, All-Union Committee on Arts Affairs. Established in 1936 as a subdivision of Sovnarkom to define and enforce official policy in the arts. Platon

Kerzhentsev served as its first chairman, followed after 1938 by Aleksey Nazarov, Mikhail Khrapchenko, Polikarp Lebedev, and Nikolay Bepalov. In 1953, the Committee was dissolved and replaced, along with several other branches of the Stalinist cultural apparatus, by the Ministry of Culture (*Ministerstvo kulturi*).



Vsesoyuzniy komitet po radiofikatsii i radioveshchaniyu, All-Union Radio Committee. Established in 1933, with Platon Kerzhentsev as head until 1936. Before that part of the People's Communications Commissariat (*Narodniy komissariat svyazi*). Housed cultural divisions dedicated to literature, music, and children's programs. During World War II the music division was supervised by Dmitriy Kabalevsky. Sergey Balasanyan served as deputy director of the Radio Committee and, during the period of Prokofiev's acquaintanceship with him, the officer responsible for music programming.

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Prokofiev and Lina, 1933. [Russian State Archive of Documentary Film and Photography (Rossiyskiy gosudarstvenniy arkhiv kinofotodokumentov) (RGAKFD)]



The director Aleksandr Tairov, the singer Paul Robeson, the actress Alisa Koonen, Prokofiev, and the artist Pavel Kuznetsov at Tairov's Chamber Theater, Moscow, December 1934. [RGAKFD]



With Berthe Malko, Prague, January 1938. [Malcolm Brown (MB)]



Posing at the piano, Moscow, July 22, 1940. [RGAKFD]



With the cast of *Semyon Kotko*, Stanislavsky Theater, October 1, 1940. [RGAKFD]



The young Mira Mendelson, in a photograph inscribed "To my dear beloved daddy."
[Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE)]



Abram Mendelson. [RGAE]



Receiving the Order of the Red Banner of Labor from Mikhail Kalinin, Moscow, 1943. [RGAKFD]



Sergey Vasilenko, Yuriy Shaporin, Nikolay Golovanov (at the piano), Prokofiev, and Mikhail Chulaki at a composers' gathering at the Central House of Art Workers, Moscow, 1943. [RGAKFD]



Metropole Hotel, Moscow, Fall 1943. [Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI)]



Metropole Hotel, Moscow, Fall 1943. [RGALI]



Prokofiev recalls his meetings with the English conductor Sir Henry Wood at a gathering at VOKS, Moscow, March 3, 1944. [RGALI]



102.

Playing "Patience" at the Savoy Hotel, Moscow, April 1944. [RGALI]



Studio photograph, 1945. [RGAKFD]



Receiving the Medal for Valiant Labor in the Great Patriotic War from Aram Khachaturyan in his capacity as deputy chairman of the Orgkomitet of the Union of Soviet Composers, Moscow, 1945. [RGALI]



Prokofiev plays Levon Atovmyan's arrangement of six pieces for piano from *Cinderella*, Ivanovo, Summer 1945. [RGALI]



Prokofiev with Nikolay Chemberdzh (in cap), Izrail Nestyev (in front), and others, Ivanovo, Summer 1945. [RGALI]



Dmitriy Kabalevsky, Reinhold Glier, Prokofiev (seated), Vano Muradeli, the musicologist, and State Radio administrator Yakov Solodukho and M. Yu. Dvoyrin (standing), Ivanovo, Summer 1945. [RGALI]



With Mira and (a row behind) the musicologist Marina Sabinina at a rehearsal of *War and Peace*, Moscow, June 1945. [RGALI]



116.

Lee Bland interviews Prokofiev at the dacha in Nikolina Gora, with Nikolay Myaskovsky listening, Summer 1946. [MB]



Lee Bland, Grigoriy Shneyerson, Pavel Lamm (in doorway), and Prokofiev at the dacha in Nikolina Gora, Summer 1946. [MB]



With Mira at the dacha in Nikolina Gora, Summer 1946. [RGALI]



With Mira on the balcony of the dacha in Nikolina Gora, Summer 1946. [RGALI]



The pianist and Leningrad Conservatory professor Nadezhda Golubovskaya, Prokofiev, Atovmyan, Shneyerson, and Mira at a rehearsal of the Sixth Symphony, Leningrad, October 9, 1947. [RGALI]



Nestyev, Atovmyan, Prokofiev, Shneyerson (partly obscured), and Mira at the premiere of the Sixth Symphony, Leningrad, October 11, 1947. [RGALI]



Prokofiev and Yevgeniy Mravinsky following the premiere of the Sixth Symphony, Leningrad, October 11, 1947. [RGALI]



Receiving applause following an encore performance of the *Ode to the End of the War*,
Chaikovsky Concert Hall, October 17, 1947. [RGAKFD]



The Moscow Philharmonic director Vladimir Vlasov, the conductor Konstantin Ivanov, and Prokofiev backstage at the
Chaikovsky Concert Hall, October 17, 1947. [RGAKFD]



Prokofiev and Tikhon Khrennikov at a plenary session of the Union of Soviet Composers,
Moscow, December 27, 1948. [RGAKFD]



At Nikolina Gora, 1950, in a photograph taken by his son Svyatoslav. [Serge Prokofiev Jr. (SP)]



With Svyatoslav and Oleg, Nikolina Gora, 1950, in a photograph taken by Svyatoslav's wife, Nadezhda. [SP]



The French musicologist Rostislav-Michel Hoffman and Mira in Prokofiev's study, Moscow, November 1962. [RGAKFD]